

Baptism at St. John the Evangelist

A Guide for Parents

We're not members of St. John's. Can we still have our child baptized? Absolutely! It is baptism that makes your child a member of the church and, more importantly, establishes an indelible bond with God in Jesus Christ. We hope that through the baptism, you will consider becoming an active participant in the life and ministry of the Episcopal Parish of St. John the Evangelist.

When can we have our child baptized? There are four principal days for Baptism in the Episcopal Church: All Saints' Sunday, the Baptism of Jesus, the Easter Vigil and Pentecost. With the exception of All Saints' Sunday (the first Sunday after November 1st) these are "moveable" feasts. Easter is usually in April, Pentecost is 50 days after Easter, and the Baptism of Jesus is in January.

Does the church perform private baptisms? No. All baptisms take place within the context of the Sunday morning service (either at 8:00 or 10:00 am). Since baptism is the welcoming of a new member into the household of God and the specific community that is St. John's, baptisms take place in the midst of the community's weekly celebration.

Does the church charge a fee for baptisms? There is no fee charged for the sacraments of the church. A gift to the church in the name of the baptized child is always appropriate and gratefully received. An offering of \$100 is suggested for non-members of St. John's.

What does baptism mean in the Episcopal Church? The Book of Common Prayer tells us that, "Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble." The Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer is also helpful. It follows below:

Q. What is Holy Baptism?

A. Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.

Q. What is the outward and visible sign in Baptism?

A. The outward and visible sign in Baptism is water, in which the person is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is the inward and spiritual grace in Baptism?

A. The inward and spiritual grace in Baptism is union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God's family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is required of us at Baptism?

A. It is required that we renounce Satan, repent of our sins, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Q. Why then are infants baptized?

A. Infants are baptized so that they can share citizenship in the Covenant, membership in Christ, and redemption by God.

Q. How are the promises for infants made and carried out?

A. Promises are made for them by their parents and sponsors, who guarantee that the infants will be brought up within the Church, to know Christ and be able to follow him.

Is there a form we need to send in? Yes. There is a Baptismal information sheet that is filled out and returned to the parish office.

Do we need to meet with the parish priest? In the weeks prior to the baptism, the parish priest will hold a session on baptism for the family and any available godparents. Discussion revolves around the meaning and significance of the Baptismal rite and includes a brief run-through of the logistics. This is to make sure you are able to be fully present for your child's baptism and not worry about where to stand, what to say, etc.

What about Godparents? Godparents, or Sponsors, play an important role in your child's baptism. They must be baptized Christians who promise to help raise the child in the Christian life and faith. Careful consideration should be given to who in your life is willing and able to take on this role.

When can our child receive Communion? Any baptized member of the church, regardless of age, may partake in Holy Communion. Since baptism is the primary entrance rite of the church, we consider any baptized person a full member of the church. As such, there is no "first Communion" in the Episcopal Church. While we encourage children to receive Communion, we leave this to the parents' discretion. Specific instruction about Communion takes place during Sunday School.

Now what? If you're interested in baptism for your child, contact Evelyn Czaja in the Parish Office to find out the next available baptismal date and baptismal session. She can be reached at either office@stjohns-hingham.org or 781-749-1535.

Final note. We recognize that Baptism is a joyous occasion and family and friends want to take many pictures. However we ask that there be no flash photography during the ceremony. Feel free to take as many pictures as you like after the service.