



All Saints Episcopal Church of the North Shore



Baptismal Guidelines at All Saints of the North Shore

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A Child if God, Precious in God's Sight. (Psalm 139)

Holy Baptism is a sacrament by which new members are made part of Christ's Body, the Christian Church. The outward and visible sign in baptism is water, in which an individual is baptized in the name of the Triune God (Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit). The inward and spiritual grace in baptism is the person's unity with Christ, being birthed into God's household, receiving new life in the Holy Spirit.

At All Saints, we delight in welcoming the newly baptized as partners with us in Christ's life and ministry, and we thank you for considering having your baptism here. Holy Baptism is a sacred occasion. We promise to do all in our power not only to make your baptism a joyous event, but also to support you in your life in Christ.

When we baptize infants, it is the parents and sponsors (godparents) who make promises on behalf of the child. When we baptize adults, the adult renounces evil, affirms faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and joins in promising to uphold the faith of the Church.

In baptism, holy water is poured over the head of the person being baptized. Then Chrism (holy oil, blessed by the bishop) is poured on the person's head as the presence of the Holy Spirit is invoked and claimed for this new Christian. Finally, a candle is given to the newly baptized, symbolizing that this person now shares in carrying the Light of Christ into the world.

Who can be baptized?

Anyone who seeks God and is drawn to Jesus Christ is welcome to receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism. God's invitation extends to people of all ages and from every kind of background.

Can little children really be baptized?

Yes, of course. The celebration of an infant's baptism is a joyous occasion for that child and for the family, as well as for the family-in-Christ, the church. Baptism celebrates God's love for us, and that God calls each of us to a special and personal relationship.

Must we be active members or regular givers?

No. We welcome everyone. Period. Since part of what baptism conveys is membership in the Body of Christ, the church, we welcome you to participate in our worship and community life -- before, during, and after the baptism.

What happens if we decide to postpone baptism of our child?

Nothing. If you wish to let your children make an informed choice at a later age, that is just fine.

What is the purpose of baptism?

In the Anglican Communion, we tend to emphasize the incorporation into the body of the faithful at baptism. We also focus on the covenant we make and renew with God. That is why we emphasize church membership and participation so heavily; it would be odd to baptize someone into a community in which they are not actively engaged.

Baptism provides a sacramental ritual that proclaims the essential truth that all people are marked as God's beloved forever.

What do I do if I don't know if I was ever baptized?

No problem; we've got that covered. Although we consider baptism an unrepeatable event, we also can perform what is called a "conditional baptism" in circumstances like these.

I was baptized elsewhere; do I need to be baptized again?

No. Baptism is baptism. You could have been baptized in the Roman Catholic church, a Baptist temple, or down by the riverside by a Congregationalist minister -- whatever, so long as it involved water and an invocation of the Triune God. These are all recognized by the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

When are baptisms offered?

The calendar of the Christian church has four feast days on which baptisms are especially appropriate. They are:

1. The Feast of the Baptism of our Lord, in January
2. The Great Vigil of Easter in early spring
3. The Day of Pentecost, in late spring, and
4. All Saints' Sunday, in November

We encourage baptisms on these joyous occasions.

If circumstances necessitate a different date, we will try to accommodate your need. Baptisms are not held in the season of Lent (the forty days leading up to Easter) and are not encouraged during Advent (the four weeks preceding Christmas).

The principal service involves several groups of people who plan worship, select music, and such. Therefore, we request a minimum of two months' notice for baptism at 10 a.m. The 8 a.m. service is simpler and for this reason can be more flexible.

Because baptism is an initiation into the Christian community and is a public occasion, unless there are special circumstances, we do not offer "private baptisms" that do not include the presence of gathered Christians beyond the immediate family.

Who can be godparents?

Every candidate for baptism is accompanied in their faith journey by at least one sponsor (for adults) or godparent (for minor children). The commitment of the sponsor is to support the candidate in the Christian faith and life. One sponsor must be a Christian, preferably an Episcopalian. Anyone else can serve in this role, including persons from other faith traditions or no faith tradition -- if the individual is sincere in promising to support the candidate's spiritual growth as a Christian.

Traditionally, a boy had two godfathers and one godmother, whereas a girl had two godmothers and one godfather. Today, however, any number of sponsors is considered appropriate.

How do I prepare for baptism?

Candidates for baptism—or their parents and godparents if the candidate is an infant—enter a time of holy preparation before the baptism. The clergy will gather the parents, godparents, candidates, and other family in advance of the service. Preparation can involve more extensive formation, depending on the candidate's age, background, and desire. We also encourage you to come to church regularly well in advance of a baptism.

During this time, candidates reflect prayerfully on the five promises of the Baptismal Covenant (Book of Common Prayer, pp.304-305). These serve as a foundation for a commitment to the Christian faith and life. The Christian journey is a lifelong process, and baptism marks the beginning of a commitment to grow in faith.

What are the expectations of the church after baptism?

Because baptism is a rite of initiation and welcome, the church yearns for the newly baptized to have an authentic relationship with God and the Christian assembly. A mark of this relationship will be regular participation in the life of this parish. We invite candidates for baptism to take seriously this aspect of the Christian life, expressing a sincere commitment to “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.”

How much does baptism cost?

There is no charge for this or any other sacramental rite. As a sign of God's love freely bestowed upon all people, baptism come without a price tag.

Many people, however, feel called to make a monetary donation in thanksgiving for a baptism. We remind you that the biblical standard for giving to the church is a tithe—ten per cent of all you have. If you are not currently giving at this level, we encourage you to consider prayerfully, your giving.

If you are not currently a member of the parish, making regular financial support as you are able, we will also ask you to make a contribution. Cost must never be a barrier to providing a joyful baptism.

What about pictures?

Since flash photography and spotlighted video are distracting to the congregation and the altar party, we strongly encourage you to make any recordings without these. Anyone with photographic ability will be able to remain discreet and yet take photographs that will be suitable for any family album. Any and all professional photographers or videographers must consult with the priest well before the baptism, to ensure compliance with this policy.

How do I schedule a baptism?

When you are ready to commit to a specific date, the process is quite simple. Please contact our Parish Administrator (allstoffice@gmail.com / 978-774-1150) to begin your inquiry -- or, better yet, just come to church, worship with us, and become a part of our community.