

About Baptism at St. Paul's

We are very happy that you are interested in baptism for yourself or a member of your family. To help you plan and prepare, here is an outline of what you need to know to begin the process.

The baptismal commitment. Holy Baptism is the essential first sacrament of Christian faith. For children or infants as well as for adults it is therefore to be entered into with serious preparation. For an adult who seeks baptism, this means study about Christian faith and participation in the life of the Christian community here at St. Paul's. For a family that brings a child or infant to be baptized, it means making a sincere commitment to bringing the child up as a Christian, as a member of St. Paul's or, if the family does not reside here, of some other Christian church where the family lives.

The Christian Identity. At the heart of the liturgy of Baptism is "The Baptismal Covenant," which is a solemn pledge committing oneself or one's child and one's family to formation in a Christian identity. This means that all those involved in the baptism – parents, godparents (also called sponsors), and adults being baptized – must be willing to affirm their own Christian faith and commitment. Adults make this commitment on behalf of infants and young children, who when they come to the age of confirmation (fourteen or thereabouts) will then have the opportunity to make that commitment in their own right.

Accordingly, parents and godparents must be willing to make several pledges of their own. They must be willing to declare their rejection of the spiritual forces of evil that

corrupt and destroy. They must be willing to affirm their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; and they must be willing to pledge their life-long support to helping the person being baptized develop "into the full stature of Christ."

The Christian Community. From its beginnings Christianity has been a religion practiced with the support and challenge of the community of believers. At baptism, the Christian congregation pledges its support to the person being baptized. The person being baptized, or the godparents and sponsors, in turn pledge to live in ways that reflect the example and honor the teachings of Jesus. They also commit themselves to on-going participation in the life of the community – its worship and sacraments, its fellowship, its education, its ministry to the world around it.

Initiating the Process. If you find that you are drawn to this parish and wish to be baptized here, or to present a child for baptism, we invite you to begin a conversation with one of the clergy or staff members. Depending on where you or your family might be in your Christian pilgrimage and in your knowledge about Christianity and the Episcopal Church, preparation for baptism will involve differing levels of instruction. **To seek more information or to schedule an appointment, please call the church office, 259-3013** and leave a message for Rev. Osborn, extension 12.

Some frequently asked questions.

1. **How many godparents must / may I have?** One baptized person is required as a godparent / sponsor; there may be as many others as desired, as long as they are baptized.
2. **Must a godparent have any special qualifications?** The godparent / sponsor must have been baptized and must be willing to make the pledges contained in the ceremony. These are pledges to renounce evil, to accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to help the person being baptized mature as a Christian, and to participate in the work and worship of the Church.
3. **What is the “church sponsor”?** The church sponsor is an active member of St. Paul’s who by standing with the person being baptized represents the commitment of the parish to helping that person mature as a Christian. In the case of a person or family new to the parish, a task of the parish sponsor is to help the newcomers to meet people at St. Paul’s and to help them find their way into parish activities and opportunities.
4. **May we have a private baptism?** Our guide on this matter is *The Book of Common Prayer*, which states that “Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast.” Accordingly, we try to schedule baptisms at the 9:15 service, or at one of the other Sunday services. Of course, emergency baptism can be administered at any time.
5. **Are there seasons when baptisms are not scheduled?** Baptisms are not scheduled during the seasons of Advent

(the four weeks preceding Christmas) and Lent (the six weeks preceding Easter).

6. **Are baptisms conducted at all three services?** Yes, although the preference as noted above is for the 9:15 service, when there are more children and a larger congregation present.
7. **I would like for my grandchildren to be baptized here at St. Paul’s. Can this be arranged?** That depends on both pastoral and theological considerations. If the parents live elsewhere it is most appropriate for their child to be baptized there, in the Christian community the parents are part of. Sometimes, however, young parents have to move from community to community before enduring relationships can be established. In such cases, it may be appropriate for the child to be baptized at St. Paul’s. The parents must be willing, however, to make the pledges relating to Christian commitment – including the pledge to bring the child up within a Christian community of faith. This means that they will make good faith efforts to join a church in the community where they live, before and after the baptism of their child.

Blessings to you as you consider this step in Christian faith and growth. We look forward to talking with you in person about it.

? The Mary Anne Osborn, *Associate Rector*

? The Rev. Bennett Brockman, *Rector*

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