



# **All Saints' Episcopal Church**

## **BAPTISMAL CUSTOMARY**

**Revised 2/15/2019**

## **Baptism Customary**

Holy Baptism is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace of God. Water is the sign of baptism. It represents Christ washing away sin and giving new life through the resurrection of Christ. In baptism, a person is grafted to the church, the Body of Christ, the family of God.

To be baptized at All Saints', one consults with the clergy and shows maturity of faith.

If you are willing to meet these few requirements, we look forward to making your baptism or your child's baptism a wonderful celebration of new life in the Kingdom of God.

### **We prefer to perform the baptisms on the following dates:**

- The First Sunday after the Epiphany (Winter)
- The Great Vigil of Easter (Spring)
- Pentecost Sunday (Early Summer)
- All Saints' Sunday (Late Fall)

We will, however, perform your baptism on a date and time that is convenient to you and for us. This may be a weekday, a morning or an evening, in a worship service or not in a worship service, in the Chapel, or in our main sanctuary.

God bless you as you consider this great step of faith in your life.

### **Baptism of Infants When Parents are Not Members of All Saints' (Courtesy Baptisms)**

The parent's pastor (rector) will supply us with a letter stating the parents are active in worship and support there.

Baptism counseling must be done by the other pastor (rector), prior to the baptism. When completed, the priest performing the baptism at All Saints' will have been notified by that pastor (rector) that the training is complete. The baptism will not take place until the baptism counseling is complete and the priest performing the baptism has been notified by that pastor (rector).

The baptism certificate is created by the other pastor (rector).

Godparent certificates, if any, are created by the other pastor (rector).

The baptism information is sent to the other pastor (rector) by the All Saints' priest and it is entered into the records of the parent's church.

### **Instruction for All Saints' Members**

Both the father and mother should attend baptism classes and complete them one month prior to the baptism. There will be times when one or both cannot attend classes, however it is best not to leave this with one parent.

The clergy conduct the baptism classes for adults and youth in grade six and up.

Kathy Hulin (Director of Family Ministries) is the instructor for parents of infants and children through grade five.

The topics of baptism instruction are: Customary and Application Review, What God Has to Say About Baptism in the Bible, Your Spiritual Journey & Parental Responsibility, The Place of the Church in the Family, Book of Common Prayer: The Service of Holy Baptism, and Rehearsal of the Baptism.

Your classes will be arranged by the priest conducting the service.

### **Parents of All Saints'**

*Where does the baptism happen?*

The main sanctuary is the location for baptisms which take place during regular Sunday worship. The actual ceremony occurs during the worship service and takes place at the crossing. A private baptism may be held either in the main sanctuary or in St. Mary's Chapel. Please let the priest performing your service know your preference so he can inform our altar guild.

*When does the baptism take place?*

Throughout the church year there are dates appropriate for baptisms. On page 12 of The Book of Common Prayer, Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the day of Pentecost, on or after All Saints' Day and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the First Sunday after the Epiphany). It is recommended that, as far as possible, baptisms be reserved for one of these occasions.

Baptisms are held during a Sunday worship service, normally at the 8:50 a.m. family service, when the majority of families with children are present.

We encourage public baptisms because the congregation is present and can witness the candidate making his or her covenant with God. Because we are all part of God's family, the baptism represents the candidate becoming part of our family, a

Christian family. It is wonderful being able to welcome a new member into the “spiritual” family, which will nurture them – given the opportunity.

### **What does the baptism look like?**

The baptismal font used at All Saints’ is a wooden, pedestal type stand, which holds a basin for water. It is six-sided with a lid having a cross on top. In preparation for a baptism, an altar guild member places the uncovered font in the middle of the crossing. The clergy, candidate, candidate’s parent(s) and Godparent(s) gather in a semicircle around the font. Assembling in this fashion allows a view for the congregation. On a side table are the elements necessary for the baptism, including a large brass ewer, which holds the water, baptismal shell (optional) for pouring, small linen towels, candles, and Chrismation oil in a small brass vessel. The large Christ Candle, lighted, is in its place at the altar. The altar flowers are white. The vestments, hangings, and banners are also white.

The parent(s), Godparent(s), and guests of the candidate(s) may sit anywhere in the pews, but preferably near the front on the pulpit side. If special seating is necessary, let the priest know and he will arrange that for you with a steward or the sexton.

### **How does a baptism happen?**

On page 298 in the Book of Common Prayer the Order for Holy Baptism begins. Its service closely follows the regular Sunday worship service. It is helpful to read pages 298-308 ahead of time to get an idea of the order of the service. Immediately following the sermon (or homily or remarks), the baptism portion of the service takes place. The celebrant asks for the candidate(s), parent(s), and Godparent(s) respond accordingly. Please bring a prayer book with you turned to the order of the baptismal service. This will help you make the appropriate responses.

If an infant is being baptized, the father stands directly behind the baptismal font and holds the infant during the baptism, while the mother places her hand on the child at the moment of baptism. Obviously, there will be times when the child is only comfortable with the mother and if that is the case, the father and mother switch places. At the Presentation, the parent(s) and Godparent(s) state, clearly, the first and middle name(s) of the candidate(s) when asked by the priest for the name of the child. The celebrant continues with more questions requiring responses, and offers prayers. It is important that the responses of the parent(s) and the Godparent(s) be strong, or else the congregation could doubt the sincerity and preparation of the parent(s) and Godparent(s).

The celebrant (priest) or a helper, then pours water from the ewer, while blessing it, into the basin of the font. The celebrant then uses either a hand or a baptismal

shell and pours the water over the candidate(s)'s head(s) repeating the motion three times (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The parent(s) or Godparent(s) may provide a special baptismal vessel (a baptismal cup) for this purpose, which becomes a keepsake for the occasion.

The small linen towels are for wiping any excess water off the candidate(s). Following the baptism, the Chrismation (anointing with Holy Oil) takes place, which seals the candidate(s), as Christ's own and as a member of the church family. The oil is from a small brass container and the celebrant uses it to make a cross on the forehead(s) of the candidate(s). An assistant to the celebrant lights a baptismal candle from the Christ Candle, a symbol of Christ's resurrection and the eternal life of the candidate(s). This is given to a Godparent or parent to hold during the baptism. During a Sunday baptism, the priest may then chant the Veni Creator. Before returning to the pews, the small baptism candle is extinguished and a certificate(s) of baptism from the Church is given to the candidate(s) or parent(s).

Shortly before the participants return to their seats, the clergy enjoy carrying infants down the center aisle, so worshippers can have a closer and personal look at the child(ren). Returning to the crossing, the celebrant or deacon calls for the exchange of the peace. The parent(s) and Godparent(s) exchange the peace with the celebrant and then return to their pew. There is a natural break at this time that allows for visits to the nursery or changing area. Diaper changing areas for infants are in the women's restrooms located in the lobby and in the hallway between the worship area and the Sunday school classrooms.

### **What If I Need More Information?**

During baptism instruction, time will be given for additional questions. If, however, you need more help, ask the priest conducting your baptism. He will be glad to help you with additional concerns.

### **Setting the Date**

Please arrange a helpful date and time with the priest conducting your service. He or the staff assigned to help will then set dates and times to instruct you on the baptism, duties of the baptism, and rehearse the ceremony with you.

### **Godparents**

We encourage the parent(s) to be careful when selecting a Godparent(s). It is appropriate that a Godparent(s) be an active member(s) of All Saints', another Episcopal congregation, or a Christian congregation. If not, they must worship regularly in an appropriate Christian congregation. It is not necessary, but it is helpful, to have a Godparent(s).

A Godparent is often called a 'sponsor'. If you do decide to have Godparent(s), there are two requirements for them:

- a. With the baptism application, the parent(s) are responsible for having a Godparent(s) furnish the priest conducting the service a statement sharing their relationship with Christ and the church.
- b. If a Godparent(s) is not a member(s) of All Saints', the priest conducting the service must receive, with the application, a statement from their pastor/rector that they have been active in worship. The parent(s) make sure this is part of the application.

A Godparent(s) should be present for the baptism. If they are not going to be present, the other options are to not have a Godparent(s) or select a Godparent(s) who will be present.

### **Information for a Godparent**

The Episcopal Church has long emphasized the idea of Godparents. The person(s) chosen by a parent(s) to be a Godparent(s) is traditionally a very close friend(s) of the parent(s) and a person(s) who is a deeply committed Christian(s) as well. The Godparent(s) not only helps present the child for baptism, but also promises to take responsibility with the parent(s) for the spiritual nurture of the child being baptized. A Godparent(s) actually speaks on behalf of the child when the priest asks those to be baptized if they accept the call to faith and obedience.

You, as a Godparent, have an invaluable role to play in the life of your Godchild. You are much more to him/her than a family member or friend. To your Godchild, you represent the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the nurturing love of His church. For this reason, it is really not enough to be just a good friend to the child. Make sure that he/she knows you are his/her Godparent. It is helpful if you make a practice of introducing him/her proudly as "my Godchild". You can also reinforce your relationship with him/her by signing all your letters "From your devoted Godmother" (expressed in your own words, of course). It is very important that your Godchild knows you as a Christian, not just as a friend. The easiest way to do this is to begin building your relationship with your Godchild as soon as possible, so that your identity as a follower of Christ will not be artificially introduced later in the child's life when it might be potentially embarrassing to you both.

It is a good idea to make a point of having special contacts with your Godchild at least three times a year – on his/her birthday, on the anniversary of his/her baptism, and some other time of your own choosing. If your Godchild lives out of town, you can make your contact by phone or letter. Many Godparents, however, will invite their Godchildren to visit them in the summer, or during school vacation, as a way of keeping in touch.

One of the most important aspects of building a relationship with your Godchild is being with him/her from time to time, so that you can come to know him/her as an individual who is separate from his/her parents and brother and sisters. Sometimes you will find that you can be more yourself, too, and that you can speak more freely of your faith, when you don't have other people around. One man takes

his godson to lunch every year on the anniversary of his baptism, just the two of them. Another godparent drives to another state each year to visit her Godchild on her birthday. If your Godchild lives near you, you are fortunate; you can make it clear to him/her in many ways that he/she is welcome in your home, that he/she is "special".

Sometimes Godparents feel guilty about paying more attention to the Godchild than to his/her siblings. They feel that if they bring a gift to one, they must bring a gift to all. The trouble with this is that the Godparent/Godchild relationship becomes hopelessly diluted.

Being a good Godparent is a classic case of being anonymous to some point in order to have a name and a face for others. As long as you can make it clear that you are a Godparent, and that this is the reason for your special attentiveness, the other children begin to request more attention from "their" Godparents!

Of particular importance is your spiritual relationship to your Godchild. It is the responsibility of a Godparent to pray regularly for his/her Godchild and to let the Godchild know that he/she does this. Taking your Godchild to worship is certainly one of the major pleasures of being a Godparent; one Godmother gives her Godchildren regular tours of the church; pointing out the windows, vestments, symbols, sacred vessels, etc. If your Godchild sees that the church is important to you, perhaps, it will become important to him/her, too. Above all, the Godparent is responsible for sharing his/her faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Special Note to Godfathers**

All too often, Godfathers turn over their responsibilities to their wives. This is very unhelpful. Please, Godfathers, take note that your Godchild may need a male figure to respect. If men profess their faith in Christ publicly, and take an active role in the Christian upbringing of their Godchildren, this helps to demonstrate that being a Christian is important and real.

### **Spiritual Suggestions for Godparents**

Through the solemn promises you make to God, you are responsible for your Godchild. Yours is a sacred relationship from which there should come happiness and spiritual gain to both you and your Godchild. In carrying out your trust, the following suggestions are helpful:

1. Form the habit of praying regularly for your Godchild by name, especially at the celebrations of Holy Eucharist.
2. Be present and receive Communion on the day your Godchild receives their First Holy Communion.
3. Encourage attendance by your Godchild at worship services – go along when possible.

4. Cultivate your Godchild's friendship. Multiply helpful contacts. Remember birthday and baptism anniversaries with appropriate letters or gifts.
5. When your Godchild is old enough, see that the child is enrolled in Sunday school and attends faithfully.
6. See that your Godchild has and knows how to use a Bible and a Book of Common Prayer.
7. Remember your responsibilities for the Christian growth and education of your Godchild. Be prepared to discuss the Christian life with your Godchild whenever possible.
8. Teach your Godchild to look forward eagerly to Confirmation. By all means, be present at that service.