

Information Concerning the Baptism of Infants and Children at St John's

Dear parents and grandparents of little ones,

I am so glad you are exploring the sacrament of baptism for your child, and we are honored that you feel drawn to have your child baptized at St John's. This is a wonderful community of faith where we welcome the presence, work, and partnership of the Holy Spirit in all that we do.

With this letter I want to share some guidelines regarding baptism at our church. I've put the information in Q&A form, and have included the questions we are most often asked. If you do not find here all the information you are looking for, please contact me, or our Assisting Priest for Family Ministry or our Family Faith Formation Director.

We look forward to working with you to bring your beautiful child into the household of God in Christ, and to welcoming you to our faith community.

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Director of Family Faith Form
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Blessings,
Grace and peace,
Susan+

The Rev. Susan W. Springer
Rector

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When is Holy Baptism offered at St John's?

We offer baptism on these feast days of the church: All Saints (November); The Baptism of Our Lord (January); The Great Vigil of Easter (the day prior to Easter Sunday); and Pentecost (fifty days after Easter Sunday). We also offer baptism on the first Sunday in September. When these baptism Sundays are full, we may be able to accommodate you at our Saturday night service, or at our Sunday Children's Service in the chapel. Please speak with a priest.

None of these dates are convenient for my family. Can we have a private baptism on a date of our choosing?

We do not offer private baptism. Part of the theological meaning of the sacrament of Holy Baptism is incorporation into a community of faith. In order to be true to the sacrament, the community of faith must be present, must pledge to support the child on his or her journey of faith, and must recommit

to their own baptismal vows. Thus, baptisms are only done during the context of a regularly scheduled worship service, on those days listed above.

But my child's grandparents are really concerned that our baby be baptized before he or she gets much older.

Theologically speaking, while infants should be baptized as soon as possible, we do not teach that an un-baptized infant (or child or adult) who dies un-baptized is somehow "locked out" of Heaven. We believe an intrinsic part of the nature of God is fathomless and limitless mercy. We understand it is that mercy which enables God to embrace all who come before him at the end of life, baptized and un-baptized alike.

Then why be baptized?

Because there are other meanings inherent to the sacrament of Holy Baptism: forgiveness of sin; incorporation into the community of faith; bestowal of spiritual gifts; newness of life; and sealing to God in Jesus Christ. We cover all of this and more in the baptism preparation class.

When is the baptism preparation class held?

In general, the class is held the Sunday prior to the scheduled baptism day. Once you register for baptism on a particular feast day, we will contact you regarding scheduling of the class. You must attend this class in order for your child to be baptized. The class is one and a half hours long and we ask that at least one parent and one Godparent or Sponsor be in attendance. We are happy to arrange childcare for your children, but we must have two weeks advance notice.

How long is the service? I'm concerned my little one will grow fussy.

On a baptism Sunday, the actual baptism happens following the sermon, or about 40 minutes after the service begins. If you need to leave the service to attend to a fussy child, you can relax in our narthex (lobby) at the rear of the church. From there you can hear the service and return at the appropriate time.

The people I'd like to designate as Sponsors or Godparents are not Christians. Is that okay?

Yes, and no—while you are welcome to have non-Christian family or dear friends stand with you on this special day, please plan on choosing Christians to serve as Sponsors for your child. The role of the Sponsor is to take vows on the child's behalf (when a child is too young to speak for him or herself). These vows include continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, and other uniquely Christian life practices. Sponsors also commit to take an active role in the spiritual growth of your child, and to maintain a relationship with the child, helping to teach him or her about foundational texts like the Bible, the Creeds, and the Ten Commandments. The sponsor also models for the child what it means to live a life of faithful participation in the church.

We're from out of town but we'd like to have our child baptized at St John's.

Please speak with a priest about this. Ideally, we expect that those we baptize to become members of St John's—a person's Christianity is best learned and practiced in the context of a faith community. If you grew up in Boulder, or the child's grandparents live here, we understand the desire to be baptized at St John's. If we elect to baptize your child at St John's we will help you find an Episcopal Church close to where you live so you can begin attending there when you return home.

Is there a fee for baptism?

No, however it is customary to make a monetary gift to the church in celebration of this sacramental day. Following the baptism, we will give you a certificate for your records.

