

Planning a Baptism

We are pleased that you are considering receiving the Sacrament of Holy Baptism for yourself or your child in Christ Church. Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which a person becomes part of Christ's family and receives the promise of life in the kingdom of God. In order to assist you in planning for a Baptism, we offer the following information.

Because Baptism is the outward and visible action that connects a person to God in a covenant relationship, it belongs in public worship rather than a private ceremony and therefore usually takes place within the context of the Holy Eucharist on a Sunday or other feast day. Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saints' Day or the Sunday following, and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the First Sunday after the Epiphany). The sacrament may also be celebrated on other Sundays as circumstances warrant and the church's schedule permits.

The process begins by notifying the Parish Clergy and completing a Baptismal Form for each candidate who is to receive the Sacrament.



Notification of Clergy. In order to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, candidates or their families are encouraged to contact the Parish Clergy as soon as possible, to ensure sufficient time for planning and to answer questions regarding the sacrament and its administration.

Godparents and Sponsors. *The Book of Common Prayer* provides that each candidate for Holy Baptism be sponsored by one or more baptized persons. *Sponsors* of adults and older children present their candidates, signifying endorsement of the candidates and their intention to support them by prayer and example in their Christian life. *Sponsors* of infants, commonly called *godparents*, present their candidates, make promises in their own names, and also take vows on behalf of their candidates. It is fitting that parents be included among the godparents of their own children. Parents and godparents need to be instructed in the meaning of Baptism, to help them fulfill their duties in helping the newly baptized grow in the knowledge and love of God, and in their responsibilities as members of God's Church.

Baptismal Forms – A baptismal form should be submitted for each candidate receiving the Sacrament at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled date of the Baptism. You may contact the Parish Administrator for a form and return it to the Parish Office at or before your clergy appointment. The form requests the full legal name of the candidate, his or her parents (in the case of a child), and the name and religious affiliation of godparents and sponsors. While there is no official limit to the number of sponsors a candidate may have, most candidates generally choose no more than four.

Fees – There is no charge for the administration of any of the sacraments of the Christian faith. Offerings in thanksgiving for the newly baptized, however, are always appropriate and gratefully received. Checks can be made out to the Rector's Discretionary Fund.

Certificates – A baptismal certificate, signed by the officiating clergy person, will be given to the candidate or the parents of the candidate at the conclusion of the liturgy, as a joyous reminder for the newly-baptized of their initiation into Christ's body of the Church.

A separate certificate is provided to the godparents which includes helpful suggestions and prayers for engaging in the ministry of being a godparent to your child.

Parish Registers – The names of those receiving the Sacrament of Holy Baptism are recorded in the bound Parish Register of Christ Church Cambridge and are part of the permanent records of the parish. The recorded information includes the full legal name of the person being baptized, the names of the parents of the candidate (if a child) and godparents and sponsors, together with date of birth, the city in which the birth took place, the date of the baptism, and the signature of the officiating clergy person. The baptismal certificate should be placed in a secure location as they have frequently been called up to document an individual's legal; however, upon request, the Parish Archivist can provide attestation of the Baptism from the Parish Register in the event the original baptismal certificate is lost.