



ST. LUKE'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BAPTISM GUIDELINES

... In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

edited 2018

INTRODUCTION

We are so glad that you are considering either joining the Body of Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism, or having your child participate in this rite. This guide is intended to be of assistance to you when you are preparing for a Baptism.

Baptism is not simply a ceremony, but rather a spiritual commitment on behalf of the parents and a promise to raise the child in the Christian faith and life. Baptism communicates God's grace and love to us, makes us a part of the Body of Christ, unites us to Christ's Death and Resurrection, and empowers us for growth in grace, commitment, and service to God. This is a sacred event and one that warrants our reverence.

From the Book of Common Prayer:

Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.

ST. LUKE'S BAPTISM GUIDELINES

1. ELIGIBILITY

Being rooted in the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 who is told that there is nothing that should prevent him from being baptized, any person who is desirous of Baptism for themselves or their children is eligible for the Sacrament of Baptism at St. Luke's. While the bar for eligibility is quite low, the expectation for active participation in the Church as a baptized member is high.

Baptism does not merely confer a status, it binds the person to the Body of Christ and initiates a relationship of faith with God. Therefore, unless the situation calls for an immediate Baptism, sufficient time for preparation will be given prior to the Baptism. Part of this preparation includes participating in the life of the congregation and approaching Baptism with sincere and earnest preparation. This pattern of rigorous preparation for Baptism is the tradition of the Church since its earliest days.

Children of active members of St. Luke's are welcomed to be Baptized at St. Luke's, as are children of affiliated members. Grandchildren or other relatives of members may be baptized at St. Luke's if the following conditions are met:

- 1) A letter signed by the clergy of the church where the family is active is presented to the Rector. This letter should make clear that the family is an active participant in good standing in the congregation.
- 2) Parents attend the preparation session at St. Luke's prior to Baptism.
- 3) The St. Luke's member who is requesting the Baptism be an active member of the Parish. If the members are inactive, they should participate in the life of the parish regularly for a period of several months prior to arranging for a Baptism.

Any adult seeking to be baptized is eligible for Baptism after completion of the Catechumenate program.

Any person under threat of mortal danger or illness may be baptized immediately, and instruction in the Christian faith will follow.

2. LITURGY

The *Book of Common Prayer* states that "Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, Easter Day, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saints' Day or the Sunday after All Saints' Day, and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the First Sunday after the Epiphany), or on occasions when a bishop is present. It is recommended that, as far as possible, Baptisms be reserved for these occasions." All Baptisms will be scheduled by the Rector, in consultation with the family.

The *Prayer Book* states that “Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast.” All Baptisms, therefore, are conducted during the principal Sunday liturgy.

At St. Luke’s, Baptisms, except in the cases of emergencies, are not conducted in the seasons of Advent or Lent. There are no private Baptisms, as the core of our Baptismal theology points towards becoming a member of the Body of Christ. It is most appropriate to have services of Baptism when as many brothers and sisters in Christ may be present.

Baptisms occur within context of Sunday worship, so there no choices to be made regarding the liturgy.

3. SPONSORS AND GODPARENTS

The *Prayer Book* notes that “Each candidate for Holy Baptism is to be sponsored by one or more baptized persons. Sponsors of adults and older children present their candidates and thereby signify their endorsement of the candidates and their intention to support them by prayer and example in their Christian life. Sponsors of infants, sometimes 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 are to be instructed in the meaning of Baptism, in their duties to help the new Christians grow in the knowledge and love of God, and in their responsibilities as members of his Church.” Any Godparent/sponsor must be a baptized Christian.

Having one to three sponsors for each person being baptized is appropriate. Sponsors should be aware of the commitment that they are making to nurture the baptized in faith. Sponsors should be chosen not on the basis of familial status or friendship, but rather by their commitment to the Christian life and vocation.

It is fitting for sponsors/Godparents to mark the anniversary of Baptism with prayer for the baptized.

4. PREPARATION

Attendance for parents at the Baptism preparation session is required; attendance is strongly encouraged for sponsors or Godparents. Children are welcome to attend, though they should reasonably be expected to remain mostly quiet for a 45 minute session. The preparation session will cover the Biblical and theological understanding of Baptism, a discussion of role and responsibility of the parents and sponsors, and a review of the Baptismal liturgy. If the parents of children are not themselves baptized, a longer preparation process will be required.

Typically, these sessions are held at 10am on the Saturday prior to the Baptism. The exact time will be confirmed with the Rector on a case-by-case basis.

Adults who are seeking Baptism will go through the Catechumenate process, which is a longer and more intense process of preparation. In the event that the Baptism occurs before this process, the teaching will take place after the Baptism.

5. EXPECTATIONS

Holy Baptism is appropriate for those persons who desire to be active participants in this community of faith. In most cases that will mean that adult candidates, and the parents of young children desiring Baptism, will have been attending worship regularly for a period of some months, and will have contributed to the Parish in a clear fashion.

The Baptism of children whose parents live outside of this Parish may only be scheduled at St. Luke's with the assurance that the promises and vows of Baptism will be fulfilled through active membership in another parish or community of faith. The Rector is happy to assist families who have some historic ties to St. Luke's and who now live in other communities to locate and join their local Episcopal congregation.

6. PEWS

Up to three pews can be reserved for invited family and friends. It is suggested that the parents and Godparents do not sit in pews with the best line of sight to the font, as they will not be in the pew during the Baptism. It is imperative that the parents, Godparents, and person to be Baptized show up at least 15 minutes before the beginning of the service.

7. PHOTOGRAPHY

Photos taken by family members who remain in the pews without flash are allowed. After the service, additional photos may be taken either in the Chancel or Baptistry.

8. CERTIFICATES

Baptismal certificates will be provided for the baptized and Godparents. The following information is needed to complete the certificates:

- Full name of the baptized
- Names of parents and Godparents
- Date and city of birth of the baptized

9. CLOTHING

No special clothing is required for the baptized, though it is customary to wear white. Special "christening gowns" may be used, but are by no means required or expected.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. CONFIRMATION

In the course of their Christian development, those baptized at an early age are expected, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop.

Those baptized as adults, unless baptized with laying on of hands by a bishop, are also expected to make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism in the presence of a bishop and to receive the laying on of hands.

Courses of preparation for Confirmation will be provided on a regular basis, please speak with the Rector about the Confirmation process when you are interested in this process. Youth should be at least 14 years old before entering the Confirmation process.

2. WILLS

The *Prayer Book* notes that "The Minister of the Congregation is directed to instruct the people, from time to time, about the duty of Christian parents to make prudent provision for the well-being of their families, and of all persons to make wills, while they are in health, arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, not neglecting, if they are able, to leave bequests for religious and charitable uses."

If you have not already made plans for the financial and custodial arrangements for your children (and yourself), the preparation for Baptism is a fitting time to do so.

FEES AND HONORARIA

No fees are charged and compensation is not expected. If families wish to make a contribution in thanksgiving for the Baptism, they may make a contribution to the Rector's Discretionary Fund which is used to assist those in financial need.

A PRAYER FOR THOSE TO BE BAPTIZED

O God, the creator and savior of all flesh, look with mercy on your children whom you call to yourself in love. Cleanse their hearts and guard them as they prepare to receive your Sacraments that, led by your Holy Spirit, they may be united with your Son, and enter into the inheritance of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.