

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

Why doesn't the Episcopal Church celebrate private baptisms?

Holy Baptism is the sacrament with which we begin our lives as Christians by being “marked as Christ’s own forever.” It is our “full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s body, the Church” (The 1979 Book of Common Prayer (BCP)). For this reason baptisms, are normally celebrated within the context of a Sunday service of Holy Eucharist, where the Body of Christ is made known to us not only in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, but in the gathering of the entire congregation as the Christian community, the Church. Because Holy Baptism constitutes full initiation into the life of the Christian Church, it should not be entered into lightly, but with the clear intention that the candidate will participate fully and regularly in the life of the church, especially through its services of worship, its educational programs, and its mission in the world.

When does St. Stephen's celebrate baptisms?

Baptism is especially festive and liturgically appropriate at the Easter Vigil (*March/April*), the Day of Pentecost (*May/June*), All Saints Day (*November*), and the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (*January*). At St. Stephen's, while we hope that one of these special feast days will work for you and your family, we also recognize that it is not always possible for the entire Baptismal party to be present on one of these days recommended in the BCP, so we will work with you and your family to find a Sunday that meets everyone's needs.

I want to have my child baptized at St. Stephen's. What should I do?

Parents interested in having their child baptized at St. Stephen's should download the “Application for Baptism” and send it to the church office as soon as possible. Then we invite you to make an appointment with one of the priests for baptismal preparation. Godparents are encouraged to attend. This meeting is an opportunity to explore the “how and why” of baptism, and to

discuss the promises one makes on behalf of the baptismal candidate. Our hope is that this will be just one of many conversations we will have together over the years as you and your child continue your faith journeys at St. Stephen's.

I've never been baptized. Am I too old?

It's never too late to be baptized! The baptism of an adult candidate is one of the most powerful services in the Episcopal Church. Truly God is at work in a person's life when s/he makes the decision—as a mature adult—to seek the sacrament of Holy Baptism and full membership in the Body of Christ, God's Church. Because of the seriousness with which we approach the commitments made in Baptism, adult candidates are asked not only to meet with a member of the clergy, but also to engage in a series of baptismal preparation sessions, which are scheduled periodically.

How do I choose godparents or sponsors?

Thoughtful prayer and discussion should precede the selection of godparents (in the case of infants and children) or sponsors (in the case of adults). Godparents and sponsors should be chosen for their commitment to the Christian faith and to the promises and vows they make at the baptismal service. They must willingly embrace responsibility for loving and supporting the baptismal candidate as s/he grows in the Christian faith and life. And godparents should be people with whom both you and your child will have the opportunity to grow in ever-deepening relationship in Christ.

We are delighted that you have chosen St. Stephen's as your Christian community, and are grateful for the privilege of baptizing you and/or your child!

