

CHURCH OF THE
incarnation



Holy Baptism at Incarnation



*Born again in Christ by baptism
you have become members of
Christ and of his priestly people*

Revised May 2021

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

“Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church.” (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 298)

Baptism is the foundation of the Christian life. In baptism we are joined with Jesus in his own baptism, and God says to us as to Jesus, “This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased.” In baptism we are also joined with Jesus in his cross and resurrection, sharing in his victory over evil, sin, and death. In baptism we receive the Holy Spirit and God empowers us to love and serve in Christ’s name. And in baptism we become one with all God’s family of saints, those who have been baptized in centuries past, present, and still to come.

WHO CAN BE BAPTIZED?

In the Episcopal Church both adults and children may be baptized. Adults who seek baptism for themselves promise to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord. Children too young to do so are baptized with their parents and sponsors making promises on their behalf. These adults promise to help the child they sponsor grow in the knowledge and love of God.

WHEN IS BAPTISM CELEBRATED?

Baptism is celebrated regularly several times a year:

- The Feast of the Baptism of Jesus (in early January)
- The Great Vigil of Easter (in March or April)
- Pentecost Sunday (in May or June)
- All Saints’ Sunday (first Sunday in November)
- At the Bishop’s visit to our congregation (schedule varies)

In general, baptism is scheduled for these occasions. However, when necessary, baptisms can take place on other Sundays throughout the year. We perform baptism as a part of our regular public worship because we understand baptism to be an action of the whole faith community.

HOW DO I PREPARE?

Adult candidates participate in a preparation process, usually including an Exploring Faith Class, and continuing with a period of prayer, service, and learning in the time leading up to baptism. The Exploring Faith Class will be offered regularly once or twice a year. See Pastor Stephen to create an individual plan for preparation.

For infants and young children, parents or guardians have an initial meeting with Stephen to reflect on the meaning and purpose of baptism and to set a date. Readings, at-home activities, or additional meetings may be used for continued reflection and preparation.

Finally, for both adults and children, a rehearsal is scheduled, often the day before the baptism service. Those being baptized, parents, and sponsors should all attend (please take this into account when making travel plans for out-of-town sponsors). Physically walking through the liturgy beforehand helps reduce anxiety and frees us up to be fully, prayerfully present to the baptism itself.

WHO CAN BE A GODPARENT OR SPONSOR?

In the Episcopal Church, both adults and children are presented for baptism by sponsors. For children, sponsors are also called godparents. Sponsors should be baptized themselves and should be willing to commit to supporting the newly baptized person's life and growth in Christ over the years ahead.

MAY BAPTIZED CHILDREN RECEIVE COMMUNION?

Yes! Since baptism is full incorporation into Christ and the Church, it is appropriate for any baptized person to receive Holy Communion, including children. Many parents bring their infants to communion on the day of their baptism (even babies too young for solid food can be given communion with a few drops of the consecrated wine).

Parents are encouraged to have their baptized children participate regularly in communion. While some Christian traditions require a process of education before a formal First Communion, the Episcopal Church teaches that faith is not primarily a matter of intellectual understanding, and none of us fully "understands" what happens to us in the sacraments. All of us grow into greater understanding over the course of our lives. Even very young children know what it means

to belong and to be fed. Parents and godparents, together with the clergy and the whole congregation, are responsible for helping their children grow in their understanding of their faith over the years.

I DON'T LIVE HERE BUT WOULD LIKE TO BE BAPTIZED (OR HAVE MY CHILD BAPTIZED) AT INCARNATION.

In general, we encourage people to be baptized in a congregation where they live. Baptism is entrance into the universal Church, but also into a particular faith community. During the baptismal service, the whole congregation promises to support those newly baptized in their life in Christ. However, pastoral exceptions can be made. In these cases, parents will be asked to find an Episcopal church in their community with which they can develop a relationship.

I'VE ALREADY BEEN BAPTIZED. HOW DO I BECOME A MEMBER?

Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime event: as the Prayer Book says, "The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble" (p. 298). The Episcopal Church recognizes all baptisms performed with water in the name of the Holy Trinity. If you have already been baptized, you do not need to be baptized again. If you would like to become a member of Incarnation, your baptism can be recognized here and we will joyfully welcome you into this congregation. The church also provides rites of Reaffirmation and Reception by which you may renew your baptismal covenant and receive the solemn blessing of our bishop. (When young people do this for the first time, it is called Confirmation.) If you are interested in becoming a member of Incarnation and/or preparing for Reaffirmation, Reception, or Confirmation, please talk with Pastor Stephen.

*For more information, or to set up an appointment
to begin the baptismal process, please contact the
church office at (707) 579-2604.*

God bless you in your baptismal journey!