

Baptism Policy and Information for St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Newport News

Basics of baptism

According to *The Book of Common Prayer*, Holy Baptism is “full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church.” The sacrament is to be administered within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday, and the worshippers present make a vow to do all in their power to support the newly baptized in their life in Christ. Baptisms are intended to take place in the midst of the faith community that has supported and will continue to support those who are being baptized. Therefore, those seeking baptism at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church should be regular participants in the life of this faith community.

Participation in a faith community

Occasionally, often because of longstanding family connections, clergy of St. Andrew’s are asked to administer baptism to someone who is not currently part of the worshipping community at St. Andrew’s. As long as we receive a letter from the clergy person of the faith community in which the baptized person *is* actively involved, we are happy to honor those requests. Baptism is an entrance into the Church; we want to be sure that each newly baptized person has a church in which to learn and carry out the life of faith.

Godparents and sponsors

In the Episcopal tradition, children being baptized have godparents, and adults have sponsors. You choose those folks yourselves, with a goal of picking people who are walking the life of faith and who will help the person being baptized to walk in that way. From a church perspective, that’s the purpose of godparents/sponsors: walking the journey of faith with the newly baptized, helping them to grow in knowledge and love of God.

Often, of course, families choose godparents from within the family or from other loved ones for lots of other terrific reasons, which is fine. If at least one of the chosen godparents is an actively engaged Christian, then we are all set. If that isn't the case, please ask an additional person or two to serve as godparent so that we can ensure that your child has a godparent to support him/her along the journey of faith.

For children, it’s a good idea to have separate sets of godparents for each child. For children *and* adults, we recommend including a St. Andrew’s parishioner as a godparent/sponsor so that the newly baptized person can worship regularly with that godparent/sponsor.

Choosing a date

There are four days in the church year that are especially appropriate for baptisms: the baptism of Jesus (in early January); Easter; Pentecost (which always falls exactly 7 weeks after Easter), and All Saints’ Day (always celebrated on Sunday, November 1 or the first Sunday after November 1). We also baptize on other Sundays; it just depends on the family's availability. The only season of the year in which we do not perform baptisms is Lent.

Preparing for baptism

There is a baptism prep session of about 1.5 hours for the parents, godparents, and sponsors. Often we schedule that for the day before the baptism, especially since frequently godparents or relatives are coming in from out of town. For children ages three and up, we offer a special child-friendly prep session geared to the child’s age and understanding.

*We look forward to talking with you about the sacrament of baptism
and to welcoming you (and/or your children) into the household of faith!*