A GUIDE FOR THOSE SEEKING CHRISTIAN BAPTISM
at
Epiphany Episcopal Church

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The Sacrament of Baptism
Guidelines for Baptisms at Epiphany Church

1. Non-members from outside the neighborhood are encouraged to find a local church.

2. Non-members from the neighborhood are welcome to have their children baptized as part of the Epiphany community, with the following guidelines:
   a. They must be planning their child’s baptism no sooner than six months from the time they first speak with Epiphany’s clergy
   b. They must attend Epiphany regularly prior to their child’s baptism, and will be welcomed as new members of the parish.

3. Baptisms are always celebrated within the context of the Holy Eucharist on the days set forth by the Book of Common Prayer.

4. Parents must meet with one of the clergy for instruction prior to their child’s baptism.

5. Godparents do not have to be Episcopalian, but they must be Christian.
ABOUT BAPTISM

Baptism is the entrance into New Life. It is the way in which we are spiritually born again into the Body of Christ. It is the way we begin life in Christ, the way we become Christians. In baptism, four things happen:

1. The child or adult baptized is freed from the grip of sin. He or she is released into the victorious life of Christ, who has conquered both sin and death.

2. In baptism we become "members of Christ," a part of the Church which is the Body of Christ. We share the risen life of the community of faith and share in the sacraments and prayers of the Church.

3. We also become "children of God," members of God's own family. Through baptism we are adopted into this divine family, so we dare to call God "our Father," Christ "our Brother," and the Holy Spirit "our Sanctifier."

4. And in baptism we become "inheritors of God's Kingdom. Great gifts of joy, faith, and hope are given to us in the sure confidence that not even death can separate us from the God who loves us.

Since baptism confers such gifts, it deserves to be a joyful occasion for family, friends, and the whole community of faith. Baptism is not a private service. Rather, it is a public statement of the power of God's grace in the life of the baptized and, indeed, the entire Christian community.
WHY DO WE BAPTIZE INFANTS?

We want infants to have the benefit of being in God's family all their lives. God's grace is given freely to them, and they dwell in His love. Yet babies are still babies, even when baptized.

As they grow, they need to be taught the Christian life, just as they will need to learn to read, and write. It is the duty of parents, godparents, and the Church to see that the baptized child knows Jesus Christ and grows in God's grace.

WHO ARE GODPARENTS?

They are mature Christians who agree to help the parents see that the child gets a thorough Christian education. Their duties end when the child grows up and is confirmed, but the relationship may be maintained for years to come. It is recommended that a child have two godparents of the same sex and one of the opposite sex.

Godparents may be of any age, including confirmed older siblings and cousins. They may be Christians of other churches, although at least one should be an Episcopalian. But the main prerequisite for being a godparent is that he/she be a practicing Christian. You wouldn't trust your child to a doctor who practices medicine only occasionally, would you?

ADULT BAPTISMS

When an adult is baptized, it's recommended that he/she have two sponsors. Instruction and spiritual preparation are required in advance for the person being baptized and for sponsors.
**HOW ARE BAPTISMS ARRANGED?**

Call the Church office (301) 735-7717 and make an appointment with the clergy. An information sheet will be filled out to provide a permanent record for the Church. Baptisms are arranged for only certain times of the Church year -- principally of the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, Easter Eve, Pentecost, All Saints' Day, or the Sunday after All Saints' Day. In special circumstances, other Sundays are considered, but never during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

**BEFORE BAPTISM**

A meeting between parents, godparents, and members of the immediate family is required before baptism. This meeting will be led by the clergy or a lay minister, called a "Catechist," who will give information and instruction about the sacrament and the responsibilities involved.

**AFTER BAPTISM**

When a child is baptized, a small Christ Candle is lighted, signifying a new life in Christ. Keep this candle and light it on the anniversary of the child's baptism each year. You should observe the anniversary of a baptism as you would a birthday. Most importantly, work hard to keep your child close and growing in God's love.

**WORSHIP**

The Christian community is a worshipping one, as is the Christian family. A baptized person is a full member of Christ's Body and of the Family of God. Therefore, a
baptized child or adult is welcome into full participation in the worship of the Church. This means those who are baptized may receive communion, although it is expected that instruction will be received first regarding the sacrament. Confirmation instruction is available twice a year for teenagers and adults.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Epiphany Church offers a complete program of Christian education for children and adults. Learning the Christian way of life is a group process as well as a family enterprise. It is never too early to begin, or too late to continue. This is the most important part of growing faith.

The best things in life really are free! The Church makes no charge for the administration of sacraments which are used by God for his powerful redeeming work.
Baptized with the Holy Spirit