

The Sacrament of Baptism



*THE ANGLICAN PARISH
OF HANOVER DURHAM*

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What is Baptism?

Baptism is the way in which the church receives people into the family of God to live life in a new way and with new meaning. At the time of baptism, the person is formally received as a member of the church, and may receive Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion, The Lord's Supper).

According to the *Book of Alternative Services* of the Anglican Church of Canada, "baptism is the sign of new life in Christ and unites Christ with his people" (p.146).

When we become baptized we make a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. This means that we are willing to let go of our old ways of seeing ourselves and others. We make a conscious decision to respect ourselves and others, to grow in our ability to live in harmony with others, and to forgive when others hurt us. We believe that we have a responsibility to resist evil in our own lives and to work to transform our society into a caring family which is centered on Christ's passionate love for the world.

If we are bringing children to be baptized we make a commitment to bring them up to understand God's purpose for the world and to encourage them to participate in bringing about this purpose. As baptized individuals or parents of a child being baptized we also promise to support the work of our local congregation and diocese through our gifts of time, talents, and financial resources.

If parents are not ready to make baptismal promises or wish to defer baptism until the child is able to make his or her own decision, the church also offers a service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child. This service provides an opportunity for a family to give thanks for the birth of a child and to pray for God's help in the child's care and nurture.



Who May Be Baptized?

People of all ages may be baptized: infants, children and adults. Adults who believe God is calling them into the Christian way of Life are invited to be baptized. Any adult, married or unmarried, who is baptized may wish to bring their children to be baptized.

Who are Sponsors?

Sponsors or Godparents are baptized Christians of any denomination, friends or family members who share your Christian faith and will support you as you make baptismal promises for yourself or your child. Generally each person has at least two sponsors, but may have up to four.

When does Baptism take place?

Because baptism is the way a person becomes part of the family of Christ, and part of the church community, the witness and welcome of the congregation is an integral part of the service. Members of the congregation also make promises for the newly baptized as part of the service. Normally baptism is celebrated on Sundays during worship, frequently on a 'Feast Day' of the Church (special church celebration day).

Is there preparation for Baptism?

Those wishing to be baptized or presenting their child/ren for baptism will generally be asked to attend a meeting with the priest to discuss the details of the baptism celebration and the meeting will include discussion of the meaning of baptism as well as a 'rehearsal' for the baptism service. It is ideal if the sponsors can be present at the rehearsal. Together the priest and candidates or parents will go through the baptismal service in the Book of Alternative Services and a review and discussion of the promises.

How does Baptism differ from Confirmation?

Those who were baptized as children often wish to make a mature affirmation of the baptismal promises made on their behalf by their parents and sponsors. This affirmation is done through the sacrament of confirmation, in the presence of a bishop.

How is Baptism in the Anglican Church celebrated?

The service of baptism includes the reading of scripture and preaching of a sermon, the presentation of the candidates, and the affirmation of beliefs by the candidates, or in the case of children, those who represent them. In the Anglican Church water is poured onto the head of the candidate for baptism with the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". The sign of the cross is then traced with water with chrism (a special and scented oil) on the candidate's forehead to show that baptism brings the gift of the Holy Spirit received into the church community. Normally the service continues with the celebration of Holy Communion.

What if I wish to become an Anglican but am already baptized?

Baptism in any Christian church or denomination is acknowledged as valid within the Anglican Church. Any baptized person may become a member of the Anglican parish and contributing to its life and ministry. Some parishes and individuals will want to acknowledge this publicly, such as through services of confirmation or reception by the Bishop.

Is there a fee for Baptism?

Baptism is a sacrament, 'an outward and visible sign of an inward invisible grace', and as such is a gift of God to us. There is no fee.

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*Baptism is initiation into a community of faith, and we invite you to attend worship for a time prior to baptism to become acquainted with the life of our congregation and to become involved in the Christian community.*

