

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Baptism, Confirmation, and Reception

Baptism is a sacrament of belonging

According to the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God. (BCP 858). In baptism we are united to God in Christ and receive the Holy Spirit. In baptism we enter a Covenant with God, and make several promises to God and God's Church (BCP 304-05):

- We affirm our faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We promise to "continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers."
- We promise to "persevere in resisting evil and, whenever we fall into sin, to repent and return to the Lord."
- We promise to "proclaim by word and example the good new of God in Christ."
- We promise to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves."
- We promise to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

In baptism, we promise to be active members of the worshiping community, seeking to strengthen our faith by worship and study, and to help bring God's love into the world. When we come for baptism we are saying "yes" to God. Because this Covenant is relational at his very heart, we *only baptize people who intend to be an active part of the Christian Church*.

Baptism is not a "rite of passage", it is a commitment

This is a serious commitment to a life centered in God and grounded in a faith community. Christian parents bring their children for baptism because they want them to be part of the community of faith. They take on the responsibility of raising their children as active members of the church.

Baptism is a celebration of the local Christian community

Baptism is a sacrament that involves the whole Christian community. Therefore it is normally celebrated during the main Sunday worship service. Because baptism is a community event, we do not administer private baptisms except in extreme emergencies.

Baptisms are held on specific occasions through the year:

- The Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (January)
- Easter Vigil or Easter Day (March or April)
- Pentecost (May or June)
- All Saints (November)
- Whenever the bishop visits the parish
- And other dates as may be established by the Rector

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Baptism, Confirmation, and Reception

It requires planning on the part of the church and preparation on the part of the candidate, or the parents and sponsors. Therefore, you are asked to give notice to the priest not less than one month prior to one of the pre-scheduled dates for baptism.

What the Church requires

In bringing a child to be baptized in the church we seek to give the child something of value which we already have: active membership in the Church and the joy of the Christian life. It is required that at least one of a child's parents be baptized, and a communicant member in good standing* of St. Mark's and it is normally expected that at least one is a practicing Christian. Godparents or sponsors do not need to be Episcopalians, but they must be baptized themselves, and should be practicing Christians.

Baptismal preparation for children

Before taking any significant step in life, it is appropriate to prepare for it. The same is true in beginning the Christian life with baptism. When we bring children to be baptized, the parents and godparents need to prepare for their new responsibilities. Godparents or sponsors are persons who accept the responsibility of loving and supporting the child or person as he or she matures in the Christian faith and life. In choosing people to be godparents for your children, it is wise to choose individuals whom your child will have an opportunity to know well, those who will develop a relationship with your child as well as with you.

In baptismal preparation we seek to explore our faith and to understand the promises being made at baptism. At St. Mark's a baptismal preparation session is scheduled before the date of each baptism. Parents and godparents (when possible) are expected to attend this session. We look at the meaning of baptism, the role and duties of parents and godparents, and the actual baptismal liturgy. It includes a brief walk-through of the service. The session is conducted by the officiating priest.

Baptism of adults

Although most of the above implies that baptism is for children, we baptize adults as well. Preparation in this case is more intense because we are preparing the individual for the Christian life, where for baptism of children we begin with practicing parents who will spend a number of years instructing their children in the Christian faith. For more information about baptism of adults, please contact the priest.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Baptism, Confirmation, and Reception

Fees

Often we are asked what the fee is for baptism. As a sacrament of commitment to God and membership in the church, there is *no fee for baptism*. We do encourage that a donation be made to St. Mark's Samaritan fund, which is used to meet the material needs of parishioners and neighbors who need short-term assistance. We also ask of all of our members to be responsible Christian stewards, which include committing to financial support for the church, as a regular part of their baptismal commitment and living a Christian life.

Confirmation and Reception

Confirmation is the renewal of baptismal vows for those baptized at early ages who desire to make their first adult affirmation of faith. It is a sacrament of mature adulthood.

Reception is a renewal of baptismal vows for those who have made a mature affirmation of faith in any other Christian church and who now wish to join The Episcopal Church.

Candidates for confirmation or reception (whether youth or adults) engage in a series of preparatory classes, declare their own readiness to affirm their faith, and work for the up-building of God's Church and the betterment of God's world. Those who wish to be confirmed or received commit themselves to the doctrine, discipline and authority of The Episcopal Church. Each candidate is assigned (or chooses) a sponsor who will bring them to events and classes and present them to the Bishop.

Confirmation and Reception require the laying on of hands by the Bishop and are scheduled during his visitation to the parish or at the annual diocesan wide Confirmation and Reception ceremony at Trinity Cathedral .

Next steps

For further information, please contact the priest of St. Mark's Episcopal Church at 480-964-5820.