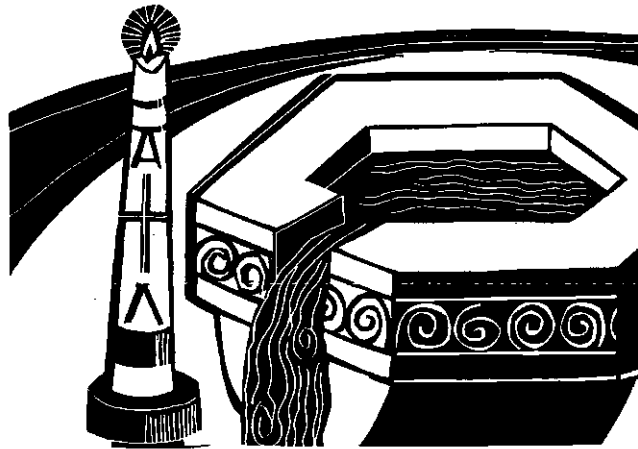


# Holy Baptism

**As Customarily Celebrated in  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church**



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Phoenix, Arizona 85008  
602 840-0437*

**What is Holy Baptism?** Holy Baptism is one of the two great sacraments Christ gave to the Church, the other is Holy Eucharist also known as Holy Communion. 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.

When infants and children are presented for baptism, their parents and sponsors (godparents) make a commitment to bring their children up to understand God's purpose for the world and to encourage them to participate in bringing about this purpose.

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.

What should I do if I want to be baptized, or have a child I wish to present for baptism? You may contact the rector by calling the church office 602 840-0437.

**Who may be baptized?** Baptism is membership in the Church and the vows of baptism require that the person seeking baptism, or the parents of young children seeking baptism for their child, must be, or intend to be, active participants in the life and ministry of the church.

Infants and young children, whose parents are members of the Church, are baptized when their parents and/or sponsors present them for baptism. Infants are baptized because baptism is an act of faith, and as in all Sacraments, the principal action is God's. Older children and adults are baptized when they present themselves for baptism. God's action in baptism is no different for those who cannot speak for themselves, than for those who can.

**How soon after birth should my child be baptized?** As soon as reasonable, although there is no theological or faith reason for children to be "hurriedly" baptized. We believe God provides for infants and young children and that baptism is not necessary to insure their entry into God's presence if they die. Baptism is not magic. It is a Sacrament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a community celebration, with participation by the child's family, sponsors, and the parish family. The Baptismal Service is also a public recognition of the parents and sponsors' commitment to raise the child in the nurture and love of God -- and in the company of the Christian community.

**May an unmarried parent present a child for baptism?** Any baptized adult may present a child for baptism. In the community of God's people both the child and the single parent will find a church family committed to their support and nurture.

**What instruction is necessary before baptism?** Parents and sponsors, who wish to present an infant or young child for baptism, must meet with the rector for Baptismal Preparation. Older children and adults must also meet with the rector for Preparation for Baptism. Baptismal preparation varies from a single meeting for parents and sponsors who are Communicants in Good Standing in the parish to more lengthy preparation for those who are not communicants or are new to the Christian Faith. The rector determines what preparation is necessary in a case-by-case basis.

**What must parents and sponsors do?** At least one adult presenting the candidate for baptism must be a member of the Church, and all must be prepared to make the vows in the Baptismal Liturgy. Those presenting infants and young children make the vows on behalf of the child and promise to “be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life.” (BCP 302). These vows imply that the parents intend to be active, with their child in the life and ministry of the Church. Older children and adults make the vows on their own behalf.

**Must a candidate have a sponsor (or sponsors)?** Yes, parents are considered the primary sponsors and there may be more sponsors if the candidate or parents desire. Only baptized persons can be sponsors.

**When is baptism administered?** Baptisms normally take place during a regularly scheduled service of worship in the Church (with the exception of emergency baptism). Baptism is usually reserved for the Feast Days of the Church particularly significant for baptism: Easter, Day of Pentecost, All Saints’ Day (or the Sunday after All Saints’ Day), the Feast of The Baptism of our Lord (the first Sunday after The Epiphany). Baptisms may be scheduled at other times at the discretion of the rector. Remember, time is needed for the baptism preparation, so it is wise to contact the priest several weeks in advance.

**What if I’m not sure if I’ve been baptized?** We do not “re-baptize.” If you are unsure of your baptism, but think you may have been baptized into the Christian Church, there are provisions for Conditional Baptism. If you are in this category, speak to the rector.

**What happens if someone dies unbaptized?** Sometimes, when a child or adult dies unbaptized, members of the deceased’s family worry about what happens after death. It is important to remember that God’s love is far greater than human love. Therefore, when we say that God judges each of us in perfect love, mercy and justice, we can trust in God’s loving care for all who have died, baptized or unbaptized.

**Is there a fee for baptism?** Baptism is a sacrament, and as such is a gift of God to us. There is no fee for baptism.