

SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW AS YOU PREPARE FOR



Holy Baptism

HOLY BAPTISM is the beginning of a new way of life. We become members of the Body of Christ, the Church. We are made Christ's - we are *CHRIST-ENED*.

Baptism is more than just an individual act, it is a sign of the new relationship between God and all human beings. The newly baptized baby is brought into that larger relationship even though she or he cannot yet be aware of the fact. After our first birth into the human family, we are *BORN AGAIN*, this time, into the family of Christ, the family of Christians. Therefore careful preparation for that life is required.

Baptism commits your child to an ongoing life of worship and service in the church of Jesus Christ. Baptism cannot be repeated. It is a "once in a life time" event, hence the need for adult candidates and the sponsors of infant candidates to be thoroughly prepared.

Baptised children should be brought up in the true knowledge of God and of what God has done for them, and be taught their need for repentance and faith, otherwise the fruits of the Spirit will not grow in them.

THE GODPARENTS/SPONSORS

Careful consideration ought to be given to the persons whom you will choose to be godparents. For these persons, with the parents, have the important task of continually witnessing to the child whom they bring to Baptism. To honour a friend or relative by asking him/her to be a godparent can result in forcing an otherwise honest person to make promises that he/she really does not intend to keep.

When choosing godparents you should consider persons who seem likely to encourage the child's spiritual development through the example of their own faith and Christian practice. Godparents must not be chosen simply on the basis of sentiment or social or family connections. In short, they should be chosen for the quality of their own faith and life in Christ.

THE SERVICE OF BAPTISM

Gathering of the Community:

Baptism joins us to the Body of Christ, the community of faith, the Church. And so, the service takes place within the context of this community, gathered together for worship in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Baptism, therefore, is not a private event, exclusively for the family and friends of the child, but a public celebration in which the family of God shares. Therefore, at the beginning of the service "the Celebrant" calls the family to worship in "The Gathering of the Community".

Proclamation of the Word:

Several elements make up the Service of Holy Baptism. One is "The Proclamation of the Word": the reading of the Scriptures and the Sermon. The Holy Scripture is the story of the people of God which begins in ancient times and culminates, for Christians, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As you prepare for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism it is important for you to hear how God, in times past, has acted for our ancestors in the faith and how God has acted, acts and will act for you and the child whom you bring to Baptism. So **listen carefully** to the Readings and the Sermon.

Presentation and Examination of the Candidates:

The Baptismal ceremony, proper, begins after the Sermon. Each candidate is presented, by name, for Baptism and then the parents and sponsors are given an opportunity to express publicly their intention to continue in the Christian Way and to bring up the child, whom they present, in this Way.

You, with the godparents, will be asked to make promises on the child's behalf. You are not merely being asked to do things such as make the child attend Sunday School, or to insist that the child joins the junior choir or servers (though these are helpful ways for the child to grow spiritually). You are being asked to:

- ❖ **Reexamine your own faith.**
- ❖ **Renounce evil and sin.**
- ❖ **Reaffirm your adherence to Christ, our Lord and Saviour.**
- ❖ **Recommit yourself to the Church.**

You are being invited to ask yourself whether your commitment to the Christian Way is strong enough to enable you to carry another person, in this case an innocent infant, along with you on that journey until he or she can walk alone.

This part of the service is not intended to be a test or court trial. It seeks to elicit a commitment to the Christian Way, a commitment that can only be realised by the grace of God and in community worship and service along with other Christians.

Prayer for the Candidates:

This prayer asks God to help the candidates to persevere in fulfilling the promises they have made (or which have been made on their behalf) and that they may be brought to the fullness of life in Christ. The prayer is an expression of our faith in the goodness of God and our wish that our desires and those of the candidates and sponsors may conform to what God's will is for us.

Thanksgiving over the Water:

This prayer begins with a reflection on the role which water has played in the lives of the ancestors of our faith, always giving life and bringing deliverance.

The Celebrant prays that those being baptized will be cleansed and reborn, that they will share in the death and resurrection of Christ. This prayer is an expression of the Church's faith that in baptism something really happens--that a human being is made a member of the Body of Christ.

The water of baptism is the outward sign of our share in Jesus' death and life. It calls us to "drown" (die) to sin and allow God to raise us to that new life.

Baptismal Covenant:

The gathered community is then invited to join with the candidates and reaffirm their baptismal covenant, committing themselves to the Apostles' Creed. This Creed confesses the Church's faith and experience in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. It speaks of our relationship to those Christians who have gone before and our hope in God.

A **Covenant** speaks of a relationship between more than one person. In the Baptismal Covenant, we are committing ourselves to a relationship with God through our membership in the Church. This relationship with God, within the community of faith, requires that we live out our baptismal covenant in our daily lives as we:

1. continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers: that is, by following the practices of the early Christians and participating regularly in the Holy Eucharist.
2. resist evil and, when unable to resist, by repenting: that is, by expressing our sorrow to God when we do wrong and seeking to amend our evil ways.
3. proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ: that is, by drawing others to Christ by our quality of life.
4. seek and serve Christ in all persons: that is, doing good to all people, not only our close friends.
5. strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being: that is, by working to overcome our prejudices and our tendency to forget that we are all one in Christ Jesus.
6. Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth?

The Baptism:

After the Baptism, the priest makes the sign of the cross on the new Christian's forehead, with the Chrism (Holy Oil) saying "I sign you with the cross, and mark you as Christ's own forever". This is a reminder that:

- ❖ only wilful disobedience on our part can separate us from God, and even then, he waits patiently for our return.
- ❖ as Christians, we must continually "bear the cross" of Christ, dying to our selfish desires so that we may rise to a life in God.

The Chrism, used in the anointing of the child, as the kings of old were anointed, signifies:

- ❖ our share in the royal priesthood of the Christ
- ❖ our being "sealed" or "marked", through the operation of the Holy Spirit, as Christ's own forever.

The Giving of the Light:

The "Light" is given to remind us that we have the responsibility, to "let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven". This light is not a symbol of our

own personal salvation but it reminds us that we must show the light of Christ through the quality of our own lives to a world which is often overcome by darkness.

The congregation then welcomes the new members of the community and urges them to confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share in his eternal priesthood.

The Peace is then shared. This is not merely a friendly exchange, but a welcome into the Peace of Christ.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". (St. Matthew 28:19)

THE CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM: GOD-PARENTS

Careful consideration ought to be given when choosing your child's godparents. Godparents, with the parents, have the important task of continually witnessing to the child whom they bring to Baptism. Before you ask anyone to be your child's godparent, please consider the following:

- 1. Is that person a Baptised member of a Christian Church?**
- 2. Does he/she participate in the life of the Church?**
- 3. Will he/she encourage my child's spiritual development through words & example?**

1. _____
(First name) (Surname) _____
(Street) (Apt. No.)

(City) (Postal Code)

(Telephone)

(Home Church: State Denomination)

2. _____
(First name) (Surname) _____
(Street) (Apt. No.)

(City) (Postal Code)

(Telephone)

(Home Church: State Denomination)

3. _____
(First name) (Surname) _____
(Street) (Apt. No.)

(City) (Postal Code)

(Telephone)

(Home Church: State Denomination)

I understand that the parents must attend the baptism preparation meetings with the godparents / sponsors.

(Parent's / Guardian's signature)

(Parent's / Guardian's signature)

THE CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

Please complete this form and **return it to the Secretary no later than date indicated on the letter, OR YOU WILL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT BAPTISM DATE.**

The Godparents are expected to help in the spiritual growth and in the whole life of the child and, themselves, must profess the Christian faith. One parent and at least one of the Godparents must be Baptized and be communicant members of the Anglican Church. The parents, all the Godparents and any other members of the family are expected to be at the Service at least thirty (30) minutes before the appointed time.

APPLICATION FOR BAPTISM (Please **print** in BLOCK LETTERS)

Date of Baptism: _____

Child's Christian Names: _____ , _____ , _____

Child's Surname: _____ Sex: Male [] Female []

Date of Birth: _____ / _____ / _____ Place of Birth (City): _____
(DD) (MM) (YY)

Father's Name: _____ Telephone Numbers: _____
(Daytime)

Address : _____
(Street) (Apt. No.) _____
(City) (Postal Code) _____
(Evening)

Church Member of: _____
Name of Church

Mother's Name (given and maiden): _____

Miss or Mrs.: _____ Telephone Numbers: _____
(Daytime)

Address : _____
(Street) (Apt. No.) _____
(City) (Postal Code) _____
(Evening)

Church Member of: _____
Name of Church

Anglican Church in your community nearest to you: _____