

Holy Baptism at Grace Church
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THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT.
THERE IS ONE HOPE IN GOD'S CALL TO US; ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM; ONE GOD
AND FATHER OF ALL.

(BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER)

Is God calling you to be baptized?

Please call, 908-756-1520 or visit our website, www.graceplainfield.org to receive free information and to schedule a meeting with the pastor. You may also write us at office@graceplainfield.org to request information.

General Information:

Baptism is initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's body the Church. It is a sacrament – something that is a visible symbol of the favor and love God has for us which we believe is given by Jesus Christ. Water is the symbol of being washed and has many meanings in scripture that are important for baptism.

On page 298 in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the book we use in worship we read, "**Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church.** The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble. Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within the service of [Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper] the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast." *Please request a copy of the Book of Common Prayer when you make an appointment to meet with the pastor.*

As John Wall notes in *A New Dictionary for Episcopalians*, "At a Baptism, the congregation renews its own baptismal vows and welcomes the newly baptized into the community." If the person baptized is too young to make the baptismal promises, they are made in the name of the child by parents and godparents. Baptism may be by immersion or by pouring water on the head of the baptized.

The Prayer Book urges that Baptism be done by the bishop when possible, and there is no more powerful action of the Church than the Easter Vigil when the bishop baptizes and confirms. But Baptism may also be done by priests and deacons (or lay people under special circumstances).

Perhaps the second most powerful image of the church in action is the Sunday morning Baptism in the context of the weekly Eucharist with the children of the parish gathered around to watch, the congregation renewing its own vows, and the child and its parents and godparents standing proudly as the priest baptizes the child.

When do Baptisms take place? As already noted, they are to take place within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast. The Prayer Book further instructs that there are five times during the Church year when Baptism is especially appropriate. They are, the Easter Vigil, the 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), and at services where a bishop is present.

The Prayer Book states, "It is recommended that, as far as possible, Baptism be reserved for these occasions..." One reason for this is because Baptism involves the whole congregation in the renewal of vows. There are times when this is especially appropriate and such renewal must involve some anticipation and preparation by the whole congregation.

When there are extenuating circumstances Baptisms may be scheduled at other times. Please consult with the schedule in this pamphlet. Be sure to check this schedule and call the Church office before making any family plans.

How many people can be baptized at once?

There may be several candidates at any time. There is no guarantee that there will be only one candidate at a service of Holy Baptism. Since Baptism is corporate in nature it is appropriate that there be more than one candidate. The Book of Acts notes that in the early Church as many as three thousand people were baptized in one day!

What is required of candidates for Baptism? As the Outline of Faith the Prayer Book says, it is required that they renounce Satan, repent of their sins, and accept Jesus as Savior and Lord.

This being the case, it is logical to ask, "Why then are infants baptized?" The Episcopal Outline of Faith continues, "Infants are baptized so that they can share citizenship in the Covenant membership in Christ, and redemption by God. Promises are made for them by their parents and sponsors, who guarantee that the infants will be brought up in the Church, to know Christ and be able to follow him."

What sort of preparation is necessary? Adult candidates will go through an Inquirers' Class. This is the same class that prepares candidate for Confirmation and as a matter of fact, adult candidates may be baptized and confirmed on the same day if a bishop is present.

In the case of infants and children, the parents should be in touch with the Rector. A consultation will be held with the parents and materials will be sent to the godparents or sponsors.

On the day of the Baptism the baptismal party is asked to gather in the church prior to the service. at this time the celebrant will go over the duties of parents and sponsors as well as the service itself.

Where should the Baptism take place? As a rule, baptisms should take place in the congregation where the candidate will be active. However, exceptions may be made to this rule. In this event, it is still expected that the newly baptized will be an active participant in the church. If not in that particular parish. It is required that the candidate or the parents of the candidate in the case of an infant, let the Rector know what church they are attending (or plan to attend) so that contact may be made and appropriate letters may be sent.

May baptized children take Communion?

Yes! Baptism is full admission into the Church and so children are encouraged to receive communion. Many couples bring their child to the altar on the day of its baptism to receive some of the consecrated wine. (This may be administered with a spoon.) It is up to the parents or guardians to decide exactly when a child is ready to start receiving on a regular basis. Also, it is important that instruction be given. Please contact the Rector to arrange for instruction.

What is the purpose of Confirmation? Confirmation is a sacramental rite of the Church in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a Bishop. This rite allows those who were baptized as children to accept the promises which were made for them as infants. It is also the way that members of other denominations can become voting members of the Episcopal Church and eligible for election to various offices. People who have not been confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church may still be baptized members and communicants of a particular congregation. However, they may not vote or hold office.

Parish sponsors for infants.

If the godparents are not members of Grace Church, we suggest that the parents choose a parish sponsor for their child. The parish sponsor embodies and enacts the congregational affirmation offered at each baptism: "Will all of you who witness these vows do all in your power to support this person in her or his life in Christ?" Their role is to be a friend and a guide to your child at Grace Church.

Baptismal Festivals in the Church Year 2010*

January 10	The First Sunday After the Epiphany: The Baptism of our Lord.
April 3	The Easter Vigil (Saturday)
May 23	The Feast of Pentecost
November 7	All Saints' Sunday (transferred from Monday, November 1)

* Whenever the Bishop visits Grace Church

Please consult with the Pastor if it is impossible for you to plan your baptism on one of these Sundays. Sometimes a Sunday is reserved as the need arises. (There is no Sunday reserved for Baptism during the season of Lent.)

Grace Church of Plainfield is a welcoming and affirming Christian community characterized by diversity, worshiping and praising God in the Anglican tradition and proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed in active discipleship.