

BAPTISM AT ST THOMAS

Welcome to the sacred journey of Holy Baptism at Saint Thomas's. Baptism is not merely a single event but the gateway to a lifelong pilgrimage in faith, as we are fully initiated by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body, the Church. This indissoluble bond, as affirmed in the Book of Common Prayer (page 298), marks the beginning of our life in Christ and our inclusion into God's eternal covenant.

As you prepare to embark on this sacred path, we invite you to explore the guidelines and deep significance of Baptism within our church community.

At Saint Thomas's, Holy Baptism is a communal celebration, woven into the fabric of our Sunday worship service, reflecting our unity in Christ's death and resurrection. It is a time when the community gathers to welcome new members into the Body of Christ. Our worship aligns Baptism with the Eucharist, the chief service on Sundays or other feasts, as suggested by the Book of Common Prayer (page 298), symbolizing our burial with Christ and our rise to newness of life.

To schedule a Baptism at Saint Thomas's, we invite parents to [reach out to our church office](#) or have a conversation with our clergy to obtain a Baptism application form. This form will be provided to you and should be completed and returned promptly. Baptism is a commitment regardless of age; what matters most is the family's dedication to raising the child in the Christian faith and life.

Adults seeking Baptism are encouraged to discuss their intentions with the clergy, who will provide an application form and information on upcoming Inquirers/Newcomers classes, held in-person or via zoom.

Please note, there is no charge for Baptism services at our church. However, families are welcome to express their gratitude with a thank offering if they so choose. Contributions can be made to "Saint Thomas's Church" and are gratefully accepted during the offering at the Baptism service, or through our online giving site.

GODPARENTS

Choosing godparents is a heart-led decision, reflecting the enduring values of our faith.

As outlined in the Book of Common Prayer (page 298), each candidate for Holy Baptism is to be sponsored by one or more baptized persons, commonly referred to as godparents. These individuals present their candidates, making promises and vows that signify a lifelong dedication to nurturing the candidate's faith in Christ.

The promises made by godparents are twofold: to ensure the child is raised within the Christian faith and life, and to support the child's growth in Christ through prayer and example (Book of Common Prayer, page 302). Parents often serve as godparents, embodying these commitments alongside other chosen sponsors.

While the tradition once called for three godparents, the current guidance allows for "one or more," focusing on the quality of faithfulness over quantity. Godparents need not be Episcopalians but must be baptized Christians, actively participating in the kingdom of God in some way, ready to embark on this journey of faith with the baptized. Their role is a testament to the communal nature of faith, where the spiritual well-being of each member is supported by the collective strength and commitment of the church community.

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

We invite parents and godparents to join us for a straightforward and informative session about Baptism at Saint Thomas's. This meeting with the priest is usually held on the Saturday before the Baptism, and is an essential part of your preparation. It's a chance for everyone involved—parents, godparents, sponsors, and baptism candidates—to get a clear understanding of what Baptism means and how the ceremony will unfold, and so all are encouraged to attend. (online option?)

During this time, we'll go over each step of the Baptism service and discuss the important role you'll play in the spiritual life of the baptized individual. This meeting is a time to talk about how to best support the child's Christian growth and to strengthen your connection with our church community. We're here to guide you through this process and make it as meaningful and straightforward as possible.

THE SERVICE OF HOLY BAPTISM

We recommend familiarizing yourself with the Holy Baptism liturgy detailed from pages 299 to 308 in the Prayer Book. This liturgy is the initial segment of our service, leading into the Holy Communion of the Eucharist detailed from page 361 onwards. You are welcome to borrow a Prayer Book, or you may find this text online.

Before the service begins, everyone involved—parents, godparents, sponsors, and baptism candidates—will gather in the church and take their places as instructed during the preparation meeting. The service starts with the entrance, followed by opening responses, prayers, readings, and the sermon. After these, those being baptized and their presenters approach the baptismal font. This is where the godparents will state their promises and the baptismal vows are made, as outlined on pages 301 to 303.

The entire congregation then participates in the Baptismal Covenant, offers prayers for the candidates, and gives thanks over the baptismal water, found on pages 304 to 307.

The baptism itself involves each candidate being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with water poured three times over their head. They are also anointed with oil, and marked with the sign of the cross on their forehead. A baptismal candle is lit and held by a parent or godparent. It serves as a reminder of the baptism and the commitment to live in the light of Christ. The candle can be taken home and lit on anniversaries of the baptism as a symbol of the ongoing journey in faith.

Following the baptism, the congregation warmly welcomes the newly baptized individuals, as noted on page 308. This is followed by the Passing of the Peace, where everyone exchanges greetings.

The service then proceeds to the Offering and the Great Thanksgiving of the Eucharist. During Holy Communion, all baptized Christians present are invited to partake in the sacred bread and wine.

BEYOND BAPTISM: WHAT COMES NEXT?

Following the sacred rite of Baptism, we encourage the newly baptized to become a part of the vibrant life of our church community. There is a rich tapestry of opportunities awaiting, each designed to foster spiritual growth and active participation.

From the nurturing environment of our "Creche" nursery care during services, to the explorative journey offered by Sunday School, there's a place for everyone. Children are invited to engage in worship during our family church Sundays, lending voice to the choir, or serving as an acolyte. Adults and older youths can also contribute to the beauty of our services by joining the flower guild, or supporting our outreach by assisting with streaming services. As they grow in faith, so too will the ways in which they can contribute and connect with our church family.

CONFIRMATION

As part of their spiritual growth, those who were baptized as children are encouraged, upon reaching maturity and after proper preparation, to publicly reaffirm their faith. This mature affirmation, made in the presence of a bishop, includes a renewal of the baptismal commitments and the significant rite of the bishop's laying on of hands, as noted in the Book of Common Prayer (page 412).

Adults who have received baptism are likewise called to make a similar public declaration of their faith and to embrace the duties that come with their baptismal vows, culminating in the laying on of hands by a bishop.

At Saint Thomas's, we offer a comprehensive Confirmation program for our youth, typically integrated into the Sunday School curriculum for 8th graders. For adults, the journey may include participating in an Inquirers/Newcomers class, which is usually conducted by our clergy over six weeks on weekday evenings. (in-person or online?)

We advise godparents to stay informed about the confirmation process and to be involved as much as possible. Their presence and support during the Confirmation service is a meaningful way to honor the commitments they made during Baptism.