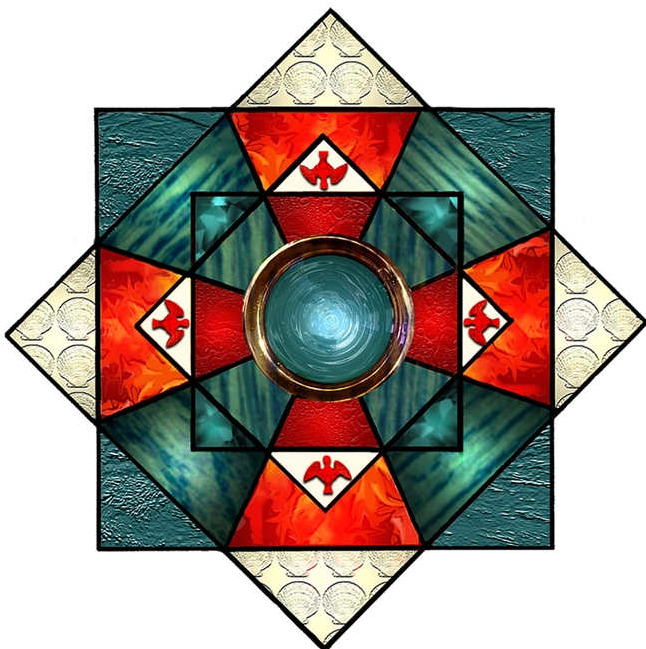


HOLY BAPTISM



St. Alban's Episcopal Church
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BAPTISM AT ST. ALBAN'S

People of all ages are baptized at St. Alban's. It is no longer the norm, if it ever was, for children under six months to be baptized.

We need to meet at least three weeks before a baptism with the parents (of young children) or the person to be baptized.

There are five special days for baptism: at Easter, and on the Day of Pentecost (seven weeks later), All Saints Sunday (the first Sunday in November), the first Sunday after the Epiphany (in January), and the Sunday when the Bishop visits us. Other Sundays are possible as well, except in Lent. Baptism takes place at either of our Sunday services.

We do not baptize at places other than the church, and unless there is a good reason, it happens at one of the main services when the congregation is gathered. Among its other meanings, baptism means becoming a member of the church. The people need to be present to welcome the newly baptized. At the service, along with the person, parents, and godparents, members of the congregation are reminded of their own baptism, and renew their own baptismal promises.

Godparents (or sponsors): The norm is two godfathers and a godmother for boys, and two godmothers and one godfather for girls. In practice, almost any number is acceptable. Parents may be godparents for their own child. We always include at least one member of the congregation among the sponsors. The purpose of godparents is to support their godchild in his or her Christian life. They should therefore be active church members, ideally Episcopalians. Hopefully they will be people who pray, and who remember their godchild. Teenagers can be godparents. They must be baptized themselves.

Sometimes, parents bring a child to be baptized and have not been baptized themselves. This is an opportunity for them to receive baptism with their child. Think about it!

It used to be (before 1970) that one had to be confirmed (by the laying on of hands by the bishop) before beginning to receive the bread and wine of communion. Now, we recognize that by baptism we become full members of the church and eligible to become communicants. All who are baptized, in whatever Christian tradition, are invited to receive communion at our church.

There are various meanings of baptism:

1. **Easter.** We die with Christ in the water of baptism and rise with him to new life. We begin life all over again. Baptism is a new birth.
2. **Forgiveness.** The water of baptism washes away our sins: things that we have done and left undone, and also our original sin, which is our human tendency to turn away from God. Baptism restores us to God.
3. **The Holy Spirit.** When Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit came upon him like a dove. When we are baptized, we receive the Spirit of God and God adopts us as daughters and sons of God.
4. **Membership of the church.** Not just St. Alban's, but the church of every tradition and in every place. Therefore people who have been baptized once should never be baptized again.
5. **The Kingdom of God.** Jesus spoke about the reign of God. Through baptism, we enter his kingdom and he reigns in our hearts. In entering the kingdom, we take on new values and at the baptism service we make five promises.
 - I. To continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship and in the breaking of bread. We commit to continue in the church's fellowship. Baptism is not one day, but a lifetime.

II. To resist evil and to acknowledge the sin that is in each one of us. We seek to do what is right and not follow the crowd.

III. To proclaim by word and example the good news of Jesus. We pass on what we have heard to others who want to know about Jesus.

IV. To serve Christ in all persons without prejudice and to accept people who are different from us - that is, to love our neighbor.

V. To strive for justice and peace. If we don't do it, who will? We commit to be proactive in the world.



In the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Baptism service (including these promises) is found on page 299. Please read through the service before the day. We have extra copies at the church.

The service begins with the readings from the Bible and the sermon. Then the parents, godparents, and candidate are invited to stand before the congregation. They are asked questions about whether they themselves will turn to Christ. If the person being baptized is old enough to answer, he or she is asked: "Do you desire to be baptized?" We pray for the church and for the candidates. We bless the water in the font (it is usually warm). The person to be baptized is named by his godparents or parents (first, or Christian, names; not family name). Three scoops of water are poured on the head of the person. Sometimes we anoint the person on the forehead with oil blessed by the bishop. We give him or her a lighted candle, now that they have turned from darkness to light. The people welcome the newly baptized and we greet one another at the Peace within the whole congregation. The second half of the service is the Eucharist or communion.

The service takes about one hour and fifteen minutes. If young children are to be baptized, it is best if they have a rehearsal before-hand so that they know what to expect and are not frightened. We are used to babies crying in the service, but if a parent wants to walk around with the baby, they should feel at liberty to do that. The family sits in the front rows and there is a door nearby. We like to know how many people are coming so that we can reserve adequate seats. Sometimes parents (and sometimes godparents) hold the infant; there is no custom about this.

Jesus told us (Matthew 28) to go out and baptize. There is no fee for baptism, but often families will want to make an offering in thanks-giving. If you wish to make an honorarium gift to the priest, please make your check payable to the *St. Alban's Rector's Discretionary Fund*.

For further information about baptism, please speak to the priest (425-778-0371).

Fr. John

Easter 2010