



## Baptisms at Saint Stephen's

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We love baptisms at Saint Stephen's and invite you to be baptized or have your child baptized within our fellowship. As you begin to make plans, here are some questions that may be on your mind:

**Why be baptized?** Baptism marks the beginning of our life in Christ and within the fellowship of his gracious people. At baptism, God establishes an indissoluble bond with the person that can usher in a lifetime of deep seated joy. Therefore, baptism is a seminal celebration in a person's life.

**How do we begin?** First of all, if you wish to be baptized or celebrate the baptism of your child within the fellowship of the Christian Church, you need to be active in the fellowship. You should start by worshipping regularly at Saint Stephen's. Sunday mornings we worship at 8, 9 & 10:30. We also offer worship celebrations each day, Monday through Friday.

Second, we require all those preparing for Holy Baptism to attend our *Foundations of Discipleship* class. This is a small group experience that looks closely at Faith, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Discipline, Eternal Life, and Prayer.

Third, we require all candidates for baptism to undergo pre-baptismal counseling with a member of the clergy associated with Saint Stephen's. Children to be baptized will be asked to participate in the counseling, as well.

**What if we live out of town and are active in another church fellowship?** If you have a connection to Saint Stephen's through your family or through an earlier association with the parish or school, we will be glad to celebrate your's or your child's baptism within this fellowship. You must go through the introductory course at your own parish along with pre-baptismal counseling with the clergy there. Once we receive verification from your pastor that those things have been accomplished, we will celebrate your baptism on behalf of your home fellowship. Your home church does not have to be of the Episcopal denomination but must be Christian.

**What if we live out of town and are not members of another fellowship?** You must be active in a Christian fellowship where you live for us to celebrate yours or your child's baptism at Saint Stephen's. If you wish, the clergy at Saint Stephen's will be more than happy to contact a local parish for you in your area.

**Will you celebrate private baptisms at Saint Stephen's?** No, Holy Baptism must be celebrated within the larger fellowship of the Church on Sunday mornings. However, emergency Baptism will be offered immediately if the person's life is at risk.

**Where can I learn more about Holy Baptism?** The rite of Holy Baptism can be found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, pp.299-314. Also questions about Holy Baptism are posed and answered on pages 858-859 of the book. [The *Book of Common Prayer* is available on-line at [www.bcponline.org](http://www.bcponline.org).]

**On which Sundays do you usually celebrate baptisms?** The most appropriate days for the celebration of Holy Baptism are: The Feast of the Baptism of our Lord - usually the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of January; Easter Day - at all worship celebrations; Pentecost Sunday - usually in the late spring; Trinity Sunday - the Sunday after Pentecost; All Saints' Sunday - usually the first Sunday of November; and any Sunday the Bishop leads worship at Saint Stephen's.

**Can we decorate the worship space?** The family may provide the flower arrangements behind the altar - one large arrangement in the Church and two small arrangements in the Chapel. No other decorations or alterations are allowed.

**May we take photographs or film during the worship?** Yes; however, the photographer must not use a flash during worship, and he or she must remain in one area. Movie cameras must be stationary and set on a tripod. Before and after the worship, you may stage poses of your choice and use flash photography.

**Must I or my child be dressed in white?** While white is the liturgical color assigned to baptism, please wear the clothes that are best suited for you and/or your child.

**Do we need baptismal sponsors or Godparents?** You do need persons to stand up to present you or your child for baptism. It is customary to choose Godparents to serve your child and to help lead them in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sponsors and Godparents must be baptized Christians.

To whom do I speak to learn more about being baptisms at Saint Stephen's? Mrs. Jeannetta Watson, Administrative Assistant to the Rector, is the point-of-contact for all wedding preparation. She will be glad to speak with you and answer your initial questions. She will then put you in contact with one of the clergy who serves Saint Stephen's. Please note that in the case of a child's baptism, we can only work with the parents or guardians. Mrs. Watson's office phone is - (512)847-9956. Her email address is - [jwatson@ststeve.org](mailto:jwatson@ststeve.org).