



GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

30 BUTLER STREET – P.O. BOX 1776, KINGSTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18704
Voice: 570-287-8440 Website: www.gracechurchkingston.org Email: gracekingston@epix.net

In faithful communion in the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

The Reverend John Franklin Hartman, *Rector*

HOLY BAPTISM

Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

This pastoral letter is designed to explain and clarify how Grace Episcopal Church approaches the sacrament of Baptism. We ask parents, sponsors, and godparents to read it before a Baptism is scheduled.

In Baptism, we as a church community celebrate the momentous and joyous occasion of welcoming a new member into the Body of Christ. To help recognize the significance of this event, we ask that parents, sponsors, and godparents who choose to have a child baptized agree to the following:

- Parents, sponsors, and godparents agree to attend a Baptismal discussion with the Rector on the Saturday immediately preceding the Sunday Baptism. There are two reasons this is important:
 - to help all involved be comfortable and prepared during the actual service
 - to consider and explore the deeper meaning of Baptism

(Please note that it would be rare for the Rector to agree to the baptism without the attendance of the participants at this class.)

- Parents, sponsors, and godparents should help the child maintain an ongoing relationship with God in Christ, by regular attendance at worship services and participation in Christian education through their home parish. Also, as time passes, parents, sponsors, and godparents should encourage and enable the child to participate in the life of the church according to his or her interests and gifts. Examples include but are not limited to children's choirs, the Christmas pageant, and serving as an acolyte. It is hoped that eventually the child would be presented to the bishop for Confirmation.
- In concert with this, parents, sponsors, and godparents should make opportunities for their own spiritual development. Godparents are chosen on the basis of their willingness to commit themselves sincerely to the child's religious development. Godparents and sponsors need not be Episcopalians, but they should be practicing, vital participants in their own communities of faith. The number of godparents may vary.
- Because of the importance of Baptism, we at Grace Church have certain procedures aimed at strengthening its meaning. We want all considering baptism at Grace Church to be aware of and to respectfully consider two theological truths -- that baptism is a symbol of incorporation into a specific Christian community and that God's grace is available to all. Baptism is partially the incorporation of a person into the community of faith and thus

should occur within the community of faith in which the child will be likely to be raised, at least for the foreseeable future. Thus, we strongly encourage at least one of the parents of a child who is to be baptized to become a current member of Grace Church, if you are not already. However, we also believe that God's grace is a gift available to all and thus will not bar anyone from the sacrament of baptism.

- The proper occasion for Baptism is at a primary service of corporate worship on Sunday. We follow the directions of the Canons (laws) of the Episcopal Church and of *The Book of Common Prayer*, which state that the following occasions are most appropriate:
 - the Easter Vigil,
 - the Day of Pentecost,
 - All Saints' Day, or the Sunday after All Saints' Day, and
 - the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the first Sunday after Epiphany).

(Please note that private Baptisms are administered only in the rarest of circumstances and, generally, for reasons of ill health of the person to be baptized.)

- On the Saturday before the scheduled Baptism, there is an informal, one hour class centering on the deeper meaning of Holy Baptism, the nature of Christian parenting, and a brief rehearsal of the actual service. Parents, sponsors, godparents, and adults being baptized **must** attend this gathering.
- There is no charge for the sacrament of Baptism. Some may choose to make a contribution to the Rector's Discretionary Fund in thanksgiving for the baptism, but this is neither required nor expected.
- No flash photography is allowed. Pictures may be taken if the photographer(s) is/are unobtrusive and do not block the congregation's view of the baptism. There will be opportunity for photos after the service has ended. Videography is allowed, however the camera and the videographer must remain stationary throughout the entire service. Mobile videography is disturbing to everyone, so it is not allowed.

We recognize that this letter includes a good deal of information. We are, of course, willing to discuss this in greater detail and address your questions and concerns. We have developed these policies to reflect the spiritual significance of this sacrament and to create an environment in which the baptism will be as lovely and as meaningful as possible.

Blessings and Peace to you,

John+

The Reverend John Franklin Hartman
Rector