

BAPTISMAL POLICY AND PRACTICES

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
MADISON, SOUTH DAKOTA

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1. PASTORAL CONCERNS

As Christian pastors, we feel a special sense of responsibility toward persons who come to us in preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Whether infants or adults, we want to help Baptismal candidates, their sponsors, and/or parents understand the tremendous significance of the Holy Sacrament. Pre-baptismal preparation is crucial to such understanding.

2. SCHEDULING

Both the congregational worship calendar and the personal calendars of the pastors must be taken into account in scheduling baptisms. Be sure to check with the pastors before making any definite plans with family and potential sponsors. Generally, a month prior notice is requested when scheduling a date for the Sacrament.

Sunday NON-COMMUNION Services are available for Holy Baptism. Saturday evenings are usually good options regardless of the Communion schedule.

3. REQUESTS FOR PRIVATE BAPTISM

There is no circumstance that mandates a "private" baptism. Holy Baptism is, by definition, a Sacrament of the whole Church. The congregation which gathers at public worship represents the whole Christian Church, and as such, it witnesses to the commitment of the Church to provide the necessary Christian nurture which is promised within the Sacrament.

In special circumstances where the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is administered in an emergency situation with no congregation present, the Rite of "PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF BAPTISM" shall normally be used in the next available Saturday/Sunday worship service of the congregation. In that way the necessary congregational witness and commitment to the newly baptized person is accomplished.

4. PRE-BAPTISMAL SESSION

Pre-baptismal instruction beyond the assigned reading may be given by one of the pastors with the candidate, parents, and/or prior to the Baptismal date at an agreed upon date and time.

5. SPONSORS/GODPARENTS

Each candidate for Baptism, child or adult, should have one or more adult sponsors who are mature in faith and piety.

Sponsors/Godparents must themselves be baptized and practicing members of a Christian congregation. Their main duty is to share with the parents the responsibility for Christian nurture of the newly baptized person, and be willing to assume that responsibility should both parents die.

Requests for infant baptism from parents who are not practicing Christians and communicant members of a church normally will be postponed after pastoral conversation, until they come to a better understanding of Holy Baptism's place in the Church, as well as their own role as parents with a responsibility for Christian nurture. In some situations, the request may be granted when acceptable sponsors/godparents are found who will take full responsibility for Christian nurture in place of the parents.

6. APPLICATION AND FEES

Each candidate or parent of candidate must fill out an "APPLICATION FOR HOLY BAPTISM" form after conversation with one of the pastors. No date for Holy Baptism will be final on the congregational calendar until this form is completed and received in the church office.

No fees are required for the pastor's time in pre-baptismal preparation or for the service itself. This is the congregation's gift to each newly baptized person. If parents or other family members out of thankfulness or celebration wish to give an honorarium, it will be warmly received. We suggest such gift be directed toward the nursery or church library.

SPECIAL NOTE

Occasionally, young parents, who are members of another congregation will request Baptism for their child(ren) in their "home" congregation for family reasons. This request may be granted provided that the pastor of their residence congregation contacts one of Trinity's pastors prior to the baptismal date and assures us that proper pre-baptismal preparation has taken place, and assures us that no breach of pastoral ethics is involved.

If the request comes from parents who are not members of an "out-of-town" congregation, the pastors of Trinity will encourage them to talk with a pastor in their resident community, and transfer their membership there. The above paragraph will then apply.