



diocese of California

The Episcopal Church in the San Francisco Bay Area

BAPTISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

When limited outdoor gatherings are permitted

*“Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church”
BCP p.298*

As we begin limited, outdoor, in-person gatherings, we have the opportunity to prayerfully and thoughtfully consider how to resume the sacrament of Holy Baptism safely and in accordance with permissible rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer. Bishop Marc has approved the following two-stage protocol.

Part 1:

In adherence to both the number, physical distancing, and mask requirements of the county, a family group may gather outside with their priest to baptize a candidate.

There should be a jug filled with water and a bowl.

Disposable bulletins may be provided, the group may bring their own BCPs, or the group may respond to verbal prompts by the priest.

The service should start with the presentation of the candidate for Holy Baptism (BCP p. 301) and continue through to the baptism itself (bottom of p.307).

At no time should there be any holding or touching of the candidate (whether baby, child or adult) by the priest.

During the Thanksgiving over the Water, the priest should approach the bowl, touch it and bless it, then withdraw to a safe distance.

The family member designated to perform this baptism during the pandemic could then baptize the candidate, repeating the words of baptism spoken by the priest.

Alternatively, the priest could sprinkle the water of baptism, perhaps with a sprig of greenery, saying the words her/himself.

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

There will be no sealing with the oil of chrism at this time.

It should also be noted, that according to the canons of the church this is a valid baptism, and should be entered into the church's records as such at this point.

Part 2:

When we are permitted to gather together, the baptism shall be celebrated in the presence of the Body of Christ with the opportunity for the congregation to renew their Baptismal Covenant, and the priest marking on previously baptized person's forehead the sign of the cross with Holy Oil, and saying the words:

You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. Amen