

GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING IN-PERSON WORSHIP



PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR BAPTISM

*in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina
in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic*

Note regarding Prayer Book & Adult Baptism as the Liturgical Norm

The 1979 Book of Common Prayer made an important, deliberate shift to restore adult baptism as “the model which manifests the meaning of the sacrament” (Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 267). As another liturgical scholar has written, the baptismal rite in the 1979 prayer book “understood the baptism of adults as the ‘liturgical norm’—it was the sort of baptism that gave shape to the rite and from which the rite drew its meaning” (Turrell, Celebrating the Rites of Initiation, 11). Thus, these guidelines first establish the protocols for adult baptism—and then sets forth additional protocols for baptisms of younger children and infants.

Protocol for Adult Baptisms – The Church must make every effort to proceed with the baptisms of those qualified adult candidates who desire to be baptized during this time.

- **Outdoors** – As with any worship gathering during these times, the safest option is for the gathering to take place outside.
- **Number of Participants** – The number of participants should be limited to those allowed under the respective phase applicable at the time of the baptism.

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR BAPTISM

- **Asymptomatic Participants** – Except in the case of an emergency baptism of a symptomatic candidate (which would involve only the celebrant and the candidate), everyone allowed to participate in the service should be asymptomatic (as defined in the general guidelines).
- **Livestream** – In order to involve as much of the parish community as possible in the baptism, live-streaming of the service is encouraged whenever possible.
- **Masks** – Everyone participating in the service will be masked. It is especially important for the celebrant and the candidate to be masked throughout the service.
- **Hand Sanitizer** – Everyone will be asked to sanitize their hands upon arrival for worship. The celebrant and the candidate need to have their own dedicated containers of hand sanitizer available.
 - **Extra Steps for Celebrant & Candidate** – Both the celebrant and the candidate will apply hand sanitizer both immediately before and after the imposition of water and anointing.
- **Distancing** – All households participating in the service will be given clear direction regarding the maintenance of proper social distancing (at least six feet between households) throughout the service. The only point in the service where the six-foot requirement is not maintained is during the imposition of water and chrism – and only involves the celebrant and the candidate.
- **Fresh Water** – Every baptism will be conducted using fresh water.
- **Clean, Sanitized Containers for Water & Chrism** – All of the containers to be used for baptismal water (pitcher, basin/bowl, smaller bowl or scoop) must be cleaned and sanitized prior to the baptism.
 - **Preferred Vessels** – The least hospitable common surface for the coronavirus is believed to be copper. Thus, the safest option is to use a copper bowl and a copper pitcher to hold the water for baptism. A smaller copper bowl can be used for scooping and applying the baptismal water to the candidate. Another small copper bowl can be used to hold the chrism prior to application.
- **Disposal of Baptismal Water after Service** – Just as under the general guidelines, there is to be no general asperges using the baptismal water. Moreover, the baptismal water should be disposed of in a respectful manner immediately after the service. No one other than the celebrant and the candidate should touch the water at any point.

Protocol for Baptisms of Small Children & Infants

Given the additional risks involved with the baptism of small children and infants – especially to the extent that the child or infant needs to be held by someone else and/or the wearing of a mask by children under two years of age is not medically advised, parishes may, in dialogue with the parents of the candidates, delay such baptisms until we are at a point where social distancing and masking requirements have been relaxed. However, to the extent that parents of candidates desire to go forward with those baptisms, the Church should make every effort to proceed with those baptisms in a manner that reduces risk of infection to all involved. Thus, the same protocol for Adult Baptisms would be used for Baptisms of Small Children & Infants with the following caveats:

- **Holding of the Infant or Small Child to Be Limited to Parents or others in the Household of the Infant or Small Child** – To the extent that the godparents/sponsors and the celebrant are not in the household of the infant or small child, they will not hold the infant or small child during the baptismal service. Thus, one parent or other household member should be identified to bring the child to the font and hold the child during the imposition of water and chrism.
- **Masking Not Advised for Children Under Two Years Old** – The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against the use of masks in children under two years of age given the risk of suffocation. Thus, since the wearing of a mask is primarily for the protection of others – not the individual wearing the mask – and the only non-household member who will come within six feet of the infant or small child during the service is the Celebrant, any priest asked to proceed with the baptism of someone under the age of two may decide that their own personal risk factors (age or underlying health conditions) warrant further delay—or may seek the assistance of another priest who is not subject to the same risk factors.
- **Distancing Guidelines Apply to Godparents Who Are Not Household Members.**