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.
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 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.**