



ANGLICAN EAST NL

Special Pastoral Directive on Holy Baptism July 10, 2020

Although our church buildings will not reopen to the general public until after Labour Day, immediate permission is granted by the Bishop to perform Holy Baptism as a “pastoral necessity” in our churches at any time prior to that reopening. The provision of the Sacrament of Baptism at this time must be done in strict adherence to the guidelines and liturgical practices as outlined in the document “Many Members, One Body.” It is advisable that this document be reviewed by your parish leadership before the baptism is held:

<https://anglicanenl.net/home/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Many-Members-One-Body.pdf>

Although the understanding of Holy Baptism as being a community event in which the whole people of God gather, given the restrictions due to COVID-19, baptisms can only be held in our churches as a family celebration and not open to the general public. Similar to weddings and funerals, this is a pastoral necessity to address requests for persons wanting to be baptized. The Holy Eucharist will not be celebrated at a baptism liturgy at this time.

If a clergy receives a request for baptism, they will need to ensure that the congregation does not exceed 50 persons (including the officiant, staff and volunteers) or 50 percent capacity of your building, whichever is less. There will need to be a registration of persons who will attend the liturgy done in advance and contact information collected as outlined on **pages 11-12** of “Many Members, One Body.”

A proper cleaning of the church building must be done before and after the baptism and physical distancing in pews must be adhered to as recommended on **pages 4-9** of “Many Members, One Body.”

The guidelines for Holy Baptism can be found on **pages 23-24** of “Many Members, One Body” and are reprinted below for immediate reference:

“The Celebration of Holy Baptism

In preparing a candidate and their family for Holy Baptism, it is important that interaction with the candidate/families be done as safely as possible. This might mean meeting, at least initially, via video link or talking on the telephone. If face to face meetings are held, ensure that everyone adheres to physical distancing requirements and that numbers are limited, preferably to a minimum. Such meetings should not be held in the house of anyone who is self-isolating or who is in a vulnerable group.

A discussion with the family regarding restrictions on the number of people able to be present should be had. The limitation on numbers might be very difficult to convey sensitively to new parents, but it is important that clergy do not feel pressured into making exceptions. The candidate, his/her parents, godparents and the cleric are all that are required to be present for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Some may choose to postpone the Baptism until all their guests can be invited to attend. In many cases, the restrictions on numbers may mean that the Baptism cannot take place during public worship. Consideration could be made for a live stream of the service (if facilities exist) or a recording of the service may be possible and such recording made available to family and friends not present. Family and friends who are a part of the vulnerable population should be discouraged from attending. People who are feeling unwell, or self-isolating, are not permitted to attend.

During the Service, the cleric should not hold the baby, but ask a parent to do so for the duration of the service. Only the cleric and parents should be at the Font while godparents maintain physical distance. When blessing the water, the cleric should not make contact with the water. While one parent holds the infant, the other parent can pour the water over the infant's forehead and make the sign of the cross at the appropriate times with the cleric speaking the words "We baptize you..." and "We sign you with the cross...". The parent should also be the one to wipe the forehead of the baptized with a single use cloth or paper towel which should be kept by the parent using it and disposed of once they get home. If a candle is lit as part of the ceremony, this should be done by one of the Godparents without any intermediary. The cleric would still be the one to speak the words 'Receive the light of Christ...'.'

Baptism liturgies with multiple candidates are prohibited at this time for the fact that the water of Baptism cannot be used upon more than one person. Once a baptism is complete, the water must be disposed of and not used for other baptisms or other purposes."

To be clear, this directive to permit the Celebration of Holy Baptism at this time does not mean that our church buildings are reopened to the general public. As the Bishop has directed, the reopening of our church buildings to the general public will not occur until after Labour Day. Further, that reopening is permitted only when each parish has put their own reopening plan in place based on "Many Members, One Body" and received permission from the Bishop to reopen **(pages 18-19)**.

While the practice of offering the Sacrament of Baptism outside of the gathering of the community on a Sunday is not the normal custom, permission to offer Holy Baptism at this time comes in response to the emerging pastoral concern that a continued delay in the provision of the Sacrament presents. Fundamental to this response is the safety of all persons using our facilities.

During this time, we must exercise maximum diligence in keeping our communities safe and well while finding the best ways to pastorally respond to unprecedented and unpredictable circumstances.