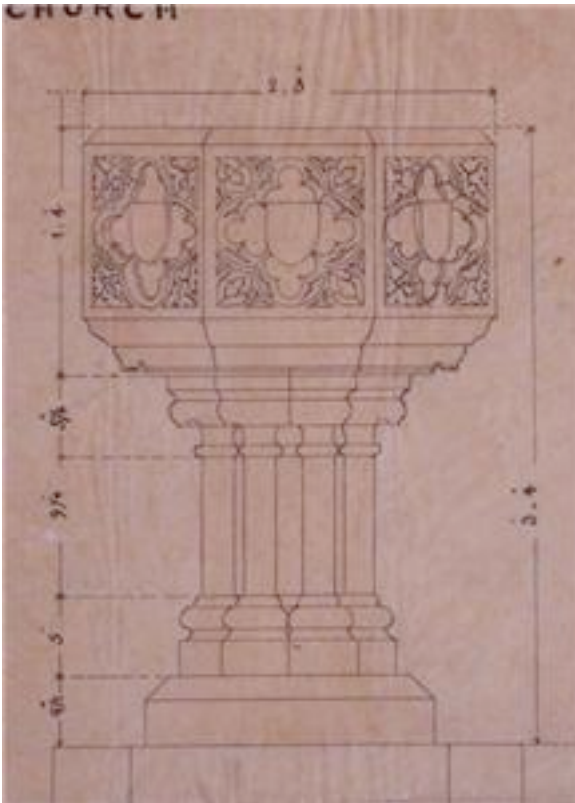


## Font – a First Sunday explanation



The word 'Font' comes from the Latin word for 'fountain' or 'spring'. In the Church we encounter this word in poetry and hymnody meaning 'spring' or 'source'. A church will almost always have at least one Font, a Baptismal Font. In earlier times this was almost always made of stone (such that at one point the word 'Font' was used to refer to any stone basin). Today they can also be found in wood or metal or glass, or as in our case, a combination of these. The earliest baptisms took place in natural running water (as Jesus in the River Jordan). Then they moved into the churches, but it was still expected that the individual would literally 'go down into' the water so that there was a large pool to accommodate the candidate and often the baptizer as well.

Most Baptismal Fonts in recent centuries have been of a size and height that make it convenient to baptize by pouring a small amount of the blessed water on the candidate's head. This is the sort we have at Saint James. Today Baptismal Fonts vary greatly in style and artistry, intending to capture the attention and make a symbolic statement. When they are not round, Fonts are most often either octagonal (the number eight referring to the 'eighth day of creation', that is the new creation in Jesus' Resurrection), or occasionally (as ours) triangular in reference to the Holy Trinity. The Font is commonly placed at the entrance to the Sanctuary, symbolizing the fact that Baptism is the door by which we enter the Church family.

The other kind of Font one encounters in churches is the Holy Water Font, also called the 'Stoup'. This is also most often made of stone, but is much smaller than the Baptismal Font and is usually attached to the wall near the doors of the Sanctuary. While there is rarely more than one Baptismal Font in a church, there are frequently several Stoups for convenience. The Stoup is meant to always contain specially blessed water for use by worshippers as they enter and leave. The worshipper dips a hand or finger into the water and makes the sign of the cross on him/herself, as a way of calling down God's blessing and carrying it forth into the world.

Like many churches these days, Saint James keeps Holy Water in the Baptismal Font, placed near the entrance to the Sanctuary, so that our Font serves both purposes, both Baptism into the household of

God, and blessing whenever people come to the Sanctuary. This emphasizes the connection between our one Baptism, and the blessing of our daily lives.

From the Blessing over the Water in the Baptismal Liturgy (p. 306 of The Book of Common Prayer)

We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.