



## BAPTISM

### **What is baptism?<sup>1</sup>**

Baptism cleanses us from what separates us from God and initiates us into a new life in Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's way of uniting us with Jesus Christ and making us members of God's family, the Church. Baptism assures us that God forgives our sins and calls us to a life of Christian service and fulfillment. Jesus said to his followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19).

### **What takes place during a baptism?**

The sacrament of baptism is celebrated in the presence of the congregation during worship. Those being baptized come to the front of the sanctuary and stand near the baptismal font with the pastor and an elder. When an infant or young child is baptized, the child's parents (or guardian), also gather at the font. The pastor will introduce the sacrament and present questions to the one being baptized or to his or her parents and then to the congregation, which promises to nurture the adult or child in the Christian faith. Then, using the water in the font, the pastor administers the sacrament.

### **Why do we baptize with water?**

The water of baptism connects us to Jesus's own baptism in the river Jordan. In his ministry, Jesus offered the gift of living water. The water also links us to the goodness of God's creation and to the grace of God's covenants first with the prophets of Israel and then with Jesus's followers. The water of baptism is the sign and seal of God's grace and covenant in Christ and a call to let justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream (Amos 5:24).

### **Who can be baptized?**

Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love and can be baptized. The sacrament of baptism is the same whether administered to those who profess their faith for themselves or to those presented for baptism as children. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith. The baptism of those who enter the covenant upon their own profession of faith witnesses to the truth that God's gift of grace is available to all who receive it with faithfulness.

### **What are the parents' responsibilities?**

Parents who present their infants and children for baptism profess their own faith and make a promise to share Christ's love and teachings with their children as they grow.

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<sup>1</sup> The following information about baptism and what the PC (USA) believes is adapted from *The Book of Order, 2019/2023*, W-3.0402-8.

**What are the church's responsibilities?**

The sacrament of baptism includes a promise by the congregation to nurture each child's faith as he or she grows and to continue to nurture the faith of those who profess their faith as adults.

**Can we have a private baptism for our child?**

The Reformed tradition makes baptism an act of the whole church and as such is normally a part of the worship of the congregation.

**What about godparents?**

The congregation's promise to nurture each newly baptized member is the promise of a collective godparent—we are all called to care for and teach our children. Individual godparents are not part of the Presbyterian tradition. However, parents may ask another person or persons to be a sponsor for their child. A sponsor should be a practicing and committed Christian and a member of a recognized church.

**Must the parent(s) be members of the church?**

The Session requires that at least one parent be a member of this congregation. However, the Session may also consider a request for the baptism of a child from a Christian parent who is an active member of another congregation that validates the practice of infant baptism. The Session and pastor will approve such a request after speaking with the parent(s) to assure the child will be nurtured in the Christian faith within a faith community.

**Does the baptism require Session approval?**

Yes. Each request for baptism is submitted to Session for approval. The Session meets on the third Monday of each month.

**Do we get a certificate of baptism?**

Yes. The certificate will be given or mailed to you. The baptism is also recorded in the church records and in the pastors' personal records. If you ever need a copy of the record, contact the church office.

**When do we arrive and how can we and our family members access the church building on Sunday morning?**

Those participating in the baptism itself should arrive a half an hour before the service begins to meet with the pastor (in the parlor during the year, in Fellowship Hall during the summer). All of the outer doors of the church building are open before worship. There is a ramp on the west side of the building (opposite side from the playground).

**Is photography allowed?**

No photography is allowed during the worship service. If you wish to take pictures in the Sanctuary, the pastors and family can re-create the scene in the chancel of the church.