



BAPTISM IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

What do Presbyterians Believe about Baptism?

Presbyterians, like many other Protestants and also Roman Catholics, practice infant baptism. Infants are presented by their parent(s), in a church service, to receive the sacrament of baptism. At that time, parent(s) make vows, as does the congregation.

We baptize babies because we believe our children are included in God's covenant of grace with Christian believers. In the Old Testament, the sign of God's covenant relationship with the people of Israel was circumcision (Genesis 17:11). The New Testament church saw baptism as the new sign of God's covenant relationship with the church, the new people of God. (Colossians 2:11-15). Jesus Christ is God's "new covenant" (Luke 22:20; I Corinthians 11:25). Baptism is a sign of the believer's incorporation into Christ as we are adopted into the family of God.

We also believe that just as in the Old Testament the sign of God's covenant was given to those of faith and their children, so also now the benefits of Jesus Christ as God's new covenant of grace are extended to believers and their children as well. In the baptism of infants we recognize this covenant and celebrate the entry of our children into the church. Infant baptism is the sign and seal of God's promises in Jesus Christ to our children. Such a practice also emphasizes God's choosing us, before we are even able to make choices; then, as one grows into awareness of God's love, that person is able to make a choice him or herself to follow Christ.

Traditionally, those baptized as infants are “confirmed” in their faith when they reach an “age of accountability.” At that point, young persons affirm the vows taken on their behalf by their parent(s) when they were baptized. In baptism, parent(s) promise to raise their child by teaching faith. The congregation promises to support, nurture, and provide opportunities for the child to grow in faith.

An Infant baptism is not a “guarantee” of salvation. But it is a wonderful sign of God’s electing love. The helpless child is drawn into the family of God, just as all of us as fallible humans are saved by God’s grace “while we [are] weak and unable to save ourselves.” (Romans 5:6).

– Donald K. McKim, *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers: Exploring Christian Faith*

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit binds the Church in covenant to its Creator and Lord. The water of Baptism symbolizes waters of Creation, of the Flood, and of the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the water of Baptism links us to the goodness of God’s creation and to the grace of God’s covenants with Noah and Israel . . . In his ministry, Jesus offered the gift of living water. So, Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s grace and covenant in Christ.

Baptism signifies:

- a. the faithfulness of God,**
- b. the washing away of sin,**
- c. rebirth,**
- d. putting on the fresh garment of Christ,**
- e. being sealed by God’s Spirit,**
- f. adoption into the covenant family of the church,**
- g. resurrection and illumination in Christ.**

– Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order (W-2.3003 & 4)

Frequently Asked Questions about Baptism

Can we have a private Baptism for our child? The Reformed tradition makes Baptism an act of the whole church and as such should be a part of the worship of the congregation.

Can we have godparents for our child? The Presbyterian Church does not include the practice of having godparents. The whole congregation, under the authority of the Session, takes on the role of godparent. However, parent(s) may ask another person or persons to be a sponsor for the child. The sponsor or sponsors should be a practicing and committed Christian and a member of a recognized Christian church. When sponsors are involved in the Baptism, their role will be acknowledged in the liturgy.

Can we ask for a particular pastor to administer the sacrament of baptism? Yes. We are glad for you to choose a pastor for whom you have a particular relationship. Otherwise, the pastor who is preaching will be the presiding pastor that day.

What kind of participation is expected of the parents in the service? The parents will answer questions as their way to reaffirm their faith and make their commitment to raise their child in the Christian faith. They will also be asked to share a verse of scripture to mark the occasion of their child's baptism. You may choose your own scripture (1-2 verses) or select one suggested at the end of this document.

When can I have my child baptized and what do I have to do to prepare for it? Baptisms normally take place at the 11am service on the second Sunday of the month. (Sometimes changed due to seasonal events such as Easter) Baptisms can be scheduled by calling the church office and speaking to a pastor. A pre-baptismal meeting are required for parent(s).

Does the Baptism of my child require Session approval? Yes. The Session meets on the third Sunday of each month.

Do we get a certificate of Baptism? Yes. The certificate will be to you.

Is photography allowed? No flash 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

According to the Presbyterian tradition, must we have our child baptized as an infant? No. You may choose to have your child raised in the program of Christian nurture in the church without infant baptism. They may make their public profession of faith when they are ready after consultation with the pastor and the Session. The program of confirmation is available during the 8th grade, any time after which is an appropriate time for youth to make a public profession of faith and prepare for baptism.

Must the parent(s) be members of the church? "When a child is being presented for Baptism, ordinarily the parent(s) or one(s) rightly exercising parent responsibility shall be an active member of the congregation. Those presenting children for Baptism shall promise to provide nurture and guidance within the community of faith until the child is ready to make a personal profession of faith and assume the responsibility of active church membership. 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...." (*Directory of Worship* ¶ 2.3014)

Baptism Scripture Suggestions

Deuteronomy 6:5-6

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

1 Samuel 1:27-28

"I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

Psalms 91:1-2

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Psalms 139:14-16

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Proverbs 2:1-5

My son (daughter), if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 3:1-4

My son (daughter), do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:33-34

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Luke 10:27

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

John 3:16,17

⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 12:15-18

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

I Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

II Corinthians 5:17-18

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...

II Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Ephesians 2:8

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...

Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:15

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Philippians 1:9-11

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the

day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Colossians 3:12-15

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I Thessalonians 5:18

...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

I Thessalonians 5:23-24

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

I Timothy 4:12

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

2 Peter 1:5-7

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

1 John 4:16

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him