

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Baptism is one of the two sacraments celebrated by the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Christian way of life. Washing with water is the sign and seal of a person's inclusion in the covenant of God's people and union with the risen Christ. Thus, baptism, whether of an adult or a child, is a response to the gifts which God provides a person in this life. God always acts in our lives first, and then we respond in thanksgiving. In the Presbyterian tradition, neither the act of baptism nor the decision to be baptized confers salvation. Both of these acts are responses to God's grace at work in a person's life.

### Catechism Questions on Baptism

#### Question 71: What is baptism?

Baptism is the sign and seal through which we are joined to Christ.

#### Question 72: What does it mean to be baptized?

My baptism means that I am joined to Jesus Christ forever...As I am baptized with water, he baptizes me with his Spirit, washing away all my sins and freeing me from their control. My baptism is a sign that one day I will rise with him in glory, may walk with him even now in newness of life.

#### Question 73: Are infants also to be baptized?

Yes. Along with their believing parents, they are included in the great hope of the gospel and belong to the people of God. Forgiveness and faith are both promised to them...through Christ's covenant with his people.

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### Book of Order Statements on Baptism

As circumcision was the sign and symbol of inclusion in God's grace and covenant with Israel, so Baptism is the sign and symbol of inclusion in God's grace and covenant with the Church (W-2.3004)

Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is God's gift of grace and also God's summons to respond to the grace (W-2.3006).

From *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, Part II, *Book of Order*

### What must I do to be baptized?

The first step is to contact the church office. One of our pastors will be happy to meet with you to discuss the meaning of baptism in the Presbyterian tradition.

### Is it possible to be baptized, but not join the church?

No. Since baptism means union with Christ, it also means union with Christ's body, the church. In baptism, a person promises to follow Christ's way of life as a member of the church.

### If I have been baptized in another tradition, do I have to be baptized again?

No. The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. places great emphasis on the unity of Christ's church we believe that anyone who has been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is a baptized member of Christ's church regardless of denomination tradition. We do, however, strongly recommend that you attend an "Inquirer's Class" to become a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dunedin.

### How can I arrange to have my child baptized?

If you are a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dunedin, simply call the church office. One of our pastors will be happy to meet with you. If you are not a member, you need to attend an "Inquirer's Class" and join our family of faith because the vows taken to become a member mirror the vows that you will make on behalf of your child as you promise to raise him or her in the Christian way of life.

### May I have godparents?

Godparents are not a specific part of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.'s tradition because the entire church family is responsible for the spiritual welfare of the child. If you wish to include "sponsors" (persons who are close to your family and who are willing to fulfill this spiritual responsibility), they are welcome to stand with you at the baptismal font and to take the baptismal vows for your child with you.

We look forward to encouraging and supporting your family as you raise your child in the faith in which you were baptized. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the church office at 733-2318, and one of our pastors will be happy to speak with you.

## Child Baptism Policies

- Children are baptized on the basis of their parents' faith and participation in the life of the church. In order for a child to be baptized; one parent must be a current member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dunedin or of another church which requests this congregation to baptize on its behalf.
- All baptisms need the prior approval of the Session. The Session ordinarily meets on the third Tuesday of each month. In order to be put on the Session agenda, baptism requests should be received by the church office not later than the Second Tuesday of the month.
- Baptisms are performed as a part of the public worship of God. Private baptism is administered only in extreme cases, such as severe illness.
- Parents may, if they desire, ask family members or friends to be sponsors. Sponsors are invited to come forward with the parents at the time of the baptism.
- The use of cameras, whether for still photographs or videos, is not permitted during the worship service. Photographs may be taken in the Sanctuary after the worship service. The pastor will be happy to be a part of those photographs if that is the family's desire.
- Because baptism is recognized as a "Sealing of God's Word", the sacrament ordinarily follows the sermon, the prayers of the people of God, and the offering. Parents are welcome to either keep their child in the sanctuary during the worship service or to take their child to the nursery until after the sermon.

Historic

# First Presbyterian Church of *Dunedin*

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