

First Presbyterian Church - Baptism Policy

Baptism is the sacrament that unites us with Jesus Christ and makes us members of God's family through the church.

Baptism initiates us into the church, assures us that God forgives our sins, bestows the promise of God's grace upon us, and calls us to a life of Christian service and fulfillment.

The entire congregation promises to love and care for the newly baptized as brothers and sisters in a new family, and to provide an example of faith and love. Therefore, it is the desire of the Session that parents wishing to have their child baptized into the church take this promise seriously, by attending a church so that the child can be raised in a community of faith. It is appropriate that the child be baptized in the church where he/she will be nurtured. The parents will meet with the Pastor, prior to their child's baptism, to discuss the meaning of baptism and the parents' willingness to uphold their responsibilities.

The sacrament of baptism is given only once to a person. It represents our first step on the journey of faith. It assures us of God's presence as we travel through life. Through baptism, we become members of God's family. Each of us is joined as a brother or sister with members of our congregation and with Christians everywhere.

Baptism is the mark of new life in Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, God assures us at baptism of: Forgiveness of sins: Sinless Himself, Jesus paid for our sins with his life. He did this so that all people may live as one according to God's will. At baptism, the Holy Spirit marks us as God's own and enables us to accept God's forgiveness through repentance. It is also victory over death: Jesus' baptism was a kind of burial by water that foreshadowed his death of the cross. At our own baptism, each of us also dies with Christ. But Jesus conquered death, so his victory over death is our victory too.

Baptism is the sign and seal of our oneness with Christ. Water is the special sign of our openness with Christ. It is the everyday element by which God's promise at baptism comes to us. Water cleanses our sins from us. It is the simple life giving sign of God's grace. The Holy Spirit is the seal that confirms our union with Christ at baptism. Through the Holy Spirit, baptism brings us God's promise of love. It nourishes our faith. It unites us in fellowship with Christ and with all people who accept Christ.

Who can be baptized? Infant baptism is one of the most important things a parent can do for their child. One of the parents must be a professing Christian. Through baptism, God sends the gift of the Holy Spirit to the child. Adults and youth who wish to publicly confess their faith and enter the church and who haven't already been baptized can be baptized.

Parents are the vital force in fostering a child's spiritual growth. In day-to-day life their responsibility is to: make the child aware of God, pray with and for the child, set a good example of Christian living, instruct the child in the faith of the church, and build a family based on the spirit of kindness, respect, and forgiveness. At the baptism, parents have a responsibility to: bring their child to God to be baptized, promise to raise their children in the Christian faith, profess their own faith in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and to receive God's promise of grace for their children.

The Presbyterian Church community has a responsibility to: celebrate baptism in all its joy, welcome new members into the life of the church, support each member during life's trials and spiritual struggles, and enrich the faith of other Christians.