

BAPTISM POLICY
Worship Committee
The Church of the Covenant

I. In General:

Baptism is one of two sacraments in the Presbyterian Church, the other being The Lord's Supper. It is administered by an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament and approved by the policies and action of the Session of The Church of the Covenant.

There are two types of baptism –infant baptism and adult baptism. Whether one is baptized as a child or an adult it is the same --an outward, visible sign of an inward, spiritual reality created by God through Jesus Christ.

The following are quotations from the Directory for Worship as found in the Book of Order (Church Constitution) of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

“Baptism is the sign and seal of incorporation into Jesus Christ.” (W-2.3001)

“In Baptism, we participate in Jesus’ death and resurrection. In Baptism we die to what separates us from God and we are raised to newness of life in Christ.” (W.2.3002)

“In Baptism, the Holy Spirit binds the Church in covenant to its Creator and Lord...Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s grace and covenant in Christ.” (W-2.3003)

“As an identifying mark, 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.” (W-2.3004)

In presenting yourself, or your child, for the sacrament of Baptism you are indicating that you believe God is already at work in your heart/ in the heart of your child. Relying on the promises of Jesus we do present those for Baptism whom He has called to be His own.

II. Other Provisions:

The policy of The Church of the Covenant is that when someone seeks to become a member of The Church of the Covenant and are not already baptized that they need to become baptized and profess their faith publicly in their Lord Jesus Christ in a public service of worship (8:30/ 9:43/ 11:00 a.m.) on the Lord's Day (Sunday). This is adult baptism.

Similarly, when a member of The Church of the Covenant wishes for their child to be baptized they can request that it be done and a date is assigned in the worship schedule. This is infant baptism.

If Baptism is to be conducted in either of these two standard ways, the Session does not need pre-approval for the Baptism, since the situations fit precisely the Session Baptism Policy and Book of Order criteria.

There is no barrier of race, gender, status or age that can prohibit baptism. There is no barrier of nationality, history, or practice that can prohibit baptism. (W-2.3005)

Baptism is received only once. (W-2.3007) We will not “rebaptize” someone.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) recognizes all Baptisms with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit administered by other Christian churches. (W-2.3010) Someone need not be “rebaptized” as a Presbyterian; we accept the baptisms of other denominations as being valid.

III. Exceptions:

Ordinarily, someone is baptized in a public service of worship on Sunday mornings; this encourages others also to come forward, express their faith and be baptized. It is a public act of worship including a public profession of faith. An exception can be granted and a small worship service conducted in the Rusch Chapel, that includes session members, other invited persons, includes the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacrament by a Minister of Word and Sacrament.

Ordinarily, Baptisms are conducted by the Ministers of The Church of the Covenant. An exception can be granted and a guest minister, at the invitation of the Pastor, and with the approval of the Worship Committee and the Session, may officiate at a Baptism under special circumstances.

Ordinarily, parents of children to be baptized must be members of The Church of the Covenant. An exception can be granted, upon approval of the Worship Committee and the Session, where there is a familial connection to The Church of the Covenant and where the parents are active members in good standing at another church. This exception is often granted where the couple lives a distance away but have a long standing connection to The Church of the Covenant. An exception can also be granted where the parents promise to become active members of another congregation, where it is unlikely because of distance that they could be active at The Church of the Covenant. An important part of the pre-baptism conference with one of the pastors is our insistence that the promises made in the sacrament have no meaning or substance if the parents are not modeling what active discipleship is to their children and if their children are not included in Christian preschool, Sunday School, Youth Group, Children’s Choirs and other youth and children’s ministry opportunities. When the congregation promises, in effect, to help the parents in raising up their child as a child of the covenant, we fully intend to do this –either through our own church programs or through the larger church universal.

IV. Process for Baptism:

The process begins with a call to the church office and by speaking with the Church Administrator. Generally speaking, if there are no requested exceptions, the date for the proposed baptism is entered onto the church calendar at the Tuesday Staff Meeting immediately following the request. When it is entered onto the church calendar its approval is final.

If the family is requesting an exception, the request is then referred to the Worship and Music Committee of Session for its review and approval, and then it is submitted to the next following regular Session Meeting, where the Session votes on the exception and approves the baptism. Then it is entered onto the church calendar and its approval is final. If an exception is requested it might take a minimum of one month prior to final approval.

Where infant baptism is concerned the couple will make an arrangement for a pre-baptism conference with one of the ministers prior to the baptism date. The Minister will counsel the family in relation to the meaning and significance of baptism, of professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the duties and obligations of raising a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Baptism certificates are prepared and signed in advance and presented on the day of Baptism, as are the special baptism candles burned during the baptism service and the Baptism Prayer Quilt.

Letters go to family members including reminders about opportunities for their children, including preschool and other activities in furtherance of the promises made by the parents at their child's baptism.