



## **BAPTISM INFORMATION**

**Baptism Application:** Please submit requests for baptism to the church office.

**Application must be received in the church office six weeks before the Baptism date.**

### **BAPTISM – WHAT IS IT?**

**Baptism** is a sacred practice of the church that provides the opportunity for individuals to join the church and become a member of the body of Christ. It is an act that Jesus himself participated in.

In baptism, God claims us as beloved children and members of Christ's body, the church, washing us clean from sin and giving us new life in Christ. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit who remains present throughout our lives.

When a child is baptized, they are too young to profess their faith and fully receive the gifts given at baptism. When they are older, our church invites teens to learn about our faith through confirmation classes then make their profession of faith in worship on a Confirmation Sunday, which marks their full acceptance of God's gifts given to them in baptism and their inclusion as full (adult) members in the church.

### **GUIDELINES**

**The PC(USA) Book of Order** (see below) sets the expectation that at least one of the parents is an active member of a congregation. If your current church is not FCPC, we will need special permission from the church of which you are a member to baptize your child here. All requests for baptism need to be approved by our church's leaders serving on the Session.

#### **Book of Order:** (W-3.0403)

When a young child is presented for Baptism at least one parent (or person exercising parental responsibility) should be an active member of a Christian church, normally the congregation in which the baptism takes place. The session may consider a request to baptize a child whose parent is an active member of another church. If the session approves such a request, it should communicate with the council of the other congregation and notify them when the Sacrament has been administered. Those presenting children for Baptism will promise to nurture and guide them until they are ready to make a personal profession of faith and assume the responsibility of active church membership.

**Christian Nurture and Guidance:** Parents who desire their child(ren) to receive the Sacrament of Christian Baptism make the following commitments as they bring their child(ren) to Christ:

- **We will attend worship regularly** in order that we may learn more about the Christian faith in which we baptize our child, and through the inspiration of worship to better prepare him/her in the Christian faith by our own example of church attendance.
- **We will study the Christian faith** so that as our child matures, we will be better able to answer his/her questions and guide his/her thinking toward a vital faith in God. So that we will be equipped to do this, we will try to read Christian books and attend meetings and courses which the church offers that will be helpful in raising our child to love and serve God.
- **We will have a time of family worship** with our child as he/she goes to bed, in the morning, or other times; reading the Bible and other literature that will help them grow in the understanding of God and his/her relationship to Christ. We will talk to, pray with, and teach them to pray.
- **We will encourage our child** as he/she grows to attend Church School and other church-sponsored activities. As parents, we will do all that we can to participate in and support the Christian Education programs in which our child is involved.

**Public Affirmation:** On the day your child is presented for Baptism you will be asked to affirm your faith by giving answer in the worship service to official questions presented in front of the congregation as witnesses.

The people of Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church are committed to loving and supporting your children and family as you grow in faith together. If you have any questions about Baptism or about Christian Education and family Ministries, contact DCEYM Sam Harding or the office staff.

### **WHAT DOES BAPTISM MEAN IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA?**

**Baptism is one of two sacraments** practiced by Presbyterians; Communion is the other. The act of baptism is deceptively simple—but in a handful of water, there is a deep well of mystery and meaning.

In baptism, we are called to a new way of life as Christ's disciples, sharing the good news of the gospel with all the world.

Presbyterians describe baptism as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace made by God through Jesus and extended to us. In baptism, God claims us as beloved children and members of Christ's body, the church, washing us clean from sin as we renounce the power of evil and seek the will and way of God.

Presbyterians have recognized baptism as one of two sacraments initiated by Christ in Scripture. All four Gospels report the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:29–34). When we are baptized with water in the name of the Trinity, we share in Christ's own baptism.

### **PRESBYTERIANS USE BAPTISM AS A COMMUNAL ACT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.**

**In the Middle Ages**, baptism came to be an increasingly private, family affair, separated from worship. The Protestant Reformation sought to change that, arguing that the power of baptism did not come from the act itself but from its connection with the promise of God conveyed in Scripture. That's why Presbyterian baptism is always accompanied by the proclamation of the Word in the context of public worship. Two

leaders in the Reformation, Luther and Calvin also insisted that baptism be followed by ongoing instruction in the faith, particularly through the study of the Bible and catechisms.

### **PRESBYTERIANS PRACTICE BOTH ADULT AND INFANT BAPTISM.**

**Infant baptism expresses** that it is God who chooses us for faith, discipleship, and salvation; without God, we have no power to claim these things for ourselves. However, we affirm that people come to faith at different stages in life and recognize the baptism of older believers as an equally valid expression of the sacrament.

### **PRESBYTERIANS SPRINKLE, POUR AND IMMERSE!**

**While pouring or sprinkling water** upon the head is most common, Presbyterians also allow for baptism by immersion. Whatever the method, the deep significance of baptism demands a visible and generous use of water, conveying the lavish outpouring of God's grace, filling believers with the gifts of the Spirit, and overflowing in lives of faithfulness, service, and love.

### **A TEACHING ELDER (THE PASTOR) AND A RULING ELDER NEEDED FOR BAPTISM**

**A teaching elder**—a pastor—must preside at the baptism, but it is a congregation's session (or ruling council) that authorizes baptisms and provides for the spiritual growth and nurture of members. That's why a ruling elder of the church always presents the candidate for baptism. In turn, both the family and the congregation promise to contribute to the baptized person's Christian formation.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE DAY OF THE BAPTISM**

- Children are a very important part of our church family, and they need to learn that they are an important part of the church. At the time of the baptism the other children of the congregation are also invited to come forward for the Children's Sermon, which is about baptism. They sit on the floor during a baptism – a front-row seat, watching the baptism! They are even asked their own question.
- **It is traditional for the child** to be baptized to wear white, but not required or necessary. White symbolizes being washed clean by God in forgiveness and love and being given new life to live in the Holy Spirit.
- Please arrive 30 minutes before worship on the day of the baptism and check in with the pastor and/or elder who is assisting with the baptism.
- The pastor presiding will invite the family forward during the worship service.
- It's fine for the child's siblings to stay with the parents at the front for the baptism or stay in the pew/seats with other family members. They are also welcome to sit with the church kids on the floor.
- Some traditions have Godparents, who also commit to helping raise your child in the Christian faith. Having godparents is optional. In the Presbyterian tradition the whole congregation promise to act as Godparents, promising to love, nurture, and pray for your child and your family.

- Review the **baptism liturgy handout** and let the pastor or DCEYM know what questions you still have.

## **BAPTISM DOES NOT END WITH THE CEREMONY**

**Raising Children in Faith needs to be foundational.** If the goal of baptism is to have the child someday develop their own personal faith in Jesus Christ, the question becomes, "What are you going to do as parents to try to bring your children to that point in life and faith?"

1. Church participation: It is essential for parents to be actively involved in the life of a church from the earliest moments in a child's life. Children learn a majority of what they will learn during the first 2 or 3 years of life. What better time to plant the seed of church participation.

Studies have shown that parents must be actively involved in the life of a church for children to make a commitment to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

- When **both** parents attend worship; 73% of children will do so as adults
- When **only Dad** attends worship, 55% of children will do so as adults
- When **only Mom** attends worship, 15% of children will do so as adults
- When **neither parent** attends worship, only 6% of children will do so as adults

In short, parent's behavior is a major factor in determining if their children will be disciples of Jesus Christ as adults. Attendance at worship and Christian Education activities is extremely important.

2. Family Prayer and Discussion: Children have a natural curiosity about God and will ask many questions. Parents are the primary teachers of faith to children. Spending regular time as a family in prayer and reading the Bible is very important. That could include Prayers at meals and bedtime, as well as at other times. That could include a regular schedule of reading Bible stories to children (there are many good children's Bibles available). That also should include taking seriously the questions about God and faith that children will naturally ask. This doesn't mean that a parent must have answers to all the questions, but they must take them seriously and seek to find the answers if possible.
3. Family Actions: One of the ways people learn faith is by watching others live their faith. This is especially true for children. This is the primary foundation of FCPC's Christian Education program. Children learn the Christian faith not only by hearing information about what we believe, but by being in a relationship with other people who are seeking to follow Christ faithfully. In other words, you will be modeling for them what it means to be a Christian. This means that parents are called to live with honesty and integrity, trying to follow God's guidelines. It also means being willing to forgive others when they have hurt us.

## **COMMON QUESTIONS**

**Can anyone be baptized?** Yes! Christ's gracious invitation is open to all who trust in Jesus for their salvation, and for the salvation of their children. However, baptism is but the beginning of a lifelong process of formation in the faith.

**Can a person who is not baptized be saved?** In a word, yes; but this by no means diminishes the importance of the sacrament. To insist on baptism as necessary for salvation would be to impinge on the limitless sovereignty of God, one of the essentials of the Reformed theological tradition. At the same time, baptism is an indispensable part of Christian life (Rom. 6:3-4), Christian identity (Gal. 3:27-28), and the church's mission (Matt. 28:19).

**Do non-Presbyterians need to be baptized when joining the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?** Not if they were previously baptized. The PC(USA) recognizes all baptisms with water in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit administered by other Christian churches.

**What time should we arrive on the day of the baptism?** Normally, we ask the family to come 30 minutes before the service time to meet with the pastor and go through the baptism ritual.

## **QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT**

- 1. What is your own baptism story?**
- 2. How did faith play a part in your life?**
- 3. Where are you right now in your own life of faith?**
- 4. Why do you feel baptism is important for your child?**
- 5. What are you doing in your life to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ?**
- 6. What activities are you doing to help your child learn to have faith in Jesus Christ?**
- 7. What spiritual experiences would you hope for your child to take part in while growing up?**
- 8. What qualities do you hope for in a church where your child grows up?**

**Thank You!**

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