



Babies and Presbyterians

What is Baptism? and Why Do Presbyterians Baptize Babies?

The joy of the birth of a child has many facets for parents, siblings, extended family and the Church. The Psalmist reflects upon the wonder of it and uniquely relates the joy this way:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. 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. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God.” (Psalm 139:13-17a, NIV)

Children are gifts from God who cares tenderly for the sons and daughters of His people through His Son who welcomed them and wanted them near. Jesus’ Apostle Peter proclaimed:

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38-39, NIV)

We celebrate with you in the birth of children as gifts from God. *“Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.”* (Psalm 127:3, NIV)

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Psalm 127:3
(NIV)

What are the responsibilities of the Church to the child and his or her parents?

Jesus said, "...and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18, NIV), and He is the Head of His Church which He likens to His body. The congregation of the church becomes the environment for assisting parents to nurture their children in Christ. This calling and ministry is illustrated by the vows made by the congregation at the baptism of children during worship services. The congregation is the spiritual family of the child and therefore the Presbyterian Church does not seek out "Godparents" for baptized children. The congregation in effect commits itself as "Godparent."



The Session (Elected Ruling Elders along with Teaching Elders) is the primary leadership group with the authority and responsibility to develop the worship and education necessary for the congregation. Parents are like the Session of their own family and are directly

responsible for the nurture and admonition of the children under their care. The congregation assists the parents in their calling.

Growing Faithful Christians happens in the neighborhood of the congregation as it serves the family and the child as protectors, teachers, comforters, and confidants. This is why there is such an emphasis upon participation of our people in worship and growing as faithful Christians. The "Church" (the believers who have put their faith in Jesus Christ) is to minister to one another just as the human body's systems are to interact with each other. The

interdependence expressed in the human body illustrates the function of the individuals and the families of the congregation. The congregation gives a sense of neighborhood security to each family and allows them to practice the faith at



home and in the congregation. This enables covenant children to see the faith lived out in the families of the congregation as well as individually by their elders, peers and those younger than they.

What are the Responsibilities of the Parents in their Home Life?

The baptism of a child not only signifies God's claim upon him or her; it also demands the commitment of the parent(s) to the "nurture and admonition" of their child (Ephesians 6:4, KJV). This can also be understood as "training and instruction." God's call to Abraham was:

"He will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." (Genesis 18:19 NIV)

That covenantal call is still in effect today for parents who have faith in Jesus.

This ministry is graphically described in the Old Testament by Moses:

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
(Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV)

The Scripture is to be upon the parent's heart because the parent is the foremost pastor-teacher to children in the household; therefore he or she must be engaged daily with God through the Bible, prayer, and worship. The word "impress" comes from the word that means "sharpen" or "hone." The image is the process of sharpening a blade. In the era of Moses, the honing of a blade to sharpness was a somewhat time-consuming and intense activity—vital because a sharp implement could mean the difference between life and death.



Moses describes the process of impressing our children in a comprehensive way. He uses the verbal phrase "talk about them." When are we to talk about God's commandments? Essentially he says 24 hours a day. When is there a time when parents or children are not "sitting at home," "walking along," "lying down," or "getting up"? The Jews were to talk about the Lord's Law and love at all times with their children. They were to keep the Scripture ever before them as their guide in life. Christian parents are to do likewise.

The ancient Jews took the next section of the passage literally by tying boxes with Scripture to their heads and arms and putting "mezuzahs" on their doorframes. These actually represent simple mnemonic devices which correspond to memorization of Scripture, use of music and art in the home, as well as other devices that can convey the truth of the Bible and its guidance for life. According to the Bible, the primary place of education is in the home, not the congregation (Church). God and His Word (the Bible) should be interwoven in every aspect and activity of our lives.



**Parents’
Attendance
required at an
Infant Baptism
Class**

A tentative date for the baptism will be set at the time of application.

The date will be confirmed only after the parent(s) complete the required class of instruction on the meaning of the sacrament of Infant Baptism. The class is offered six times during the year.





portion of the "Children's Window" in Memorial Hall

Return this form to Lynn Johnson
 at the church office or by mail to
 Lynn Johnson, 200 West Washington Street, Greenville, SC 29601

For questions or to discuss a date for baptism,
 contact Lynn at ljohnson@firstpresgreenville.org or 864.672.0326.

Application for Infant Baptism

First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC

Date of Application: _____

Full name of Infant: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Gender: boy girl

Place of Birth: _____

Parents NAME: EMAIL: PHONE:

Father: _____

Mother: _____

Mother's maiden name: _____

FPC Member status of Parents:

Father: Member Non-member Other _____

Mother: Member Non-member Other _____

Relatives active at First Presbyterian Church: _____

Desired Worship service: Requested Date _____

8:30am Traditional 10:45am Contemporary 11:00am Traditional

Desired Pastor to officiate: _____

Alternate Pastor: _____

Desired Sponsor (*ordained officer*): _____

Baptism in Our Doctrinal Statements

The Presbyterian and Reformed Churches teach the truths of the Bible through their doctrinal statements. The Westminster Confession's Shorter Catechism succinctly presents the Biblical synopsis of the Sacrament of Baptism.

How do we benefit from our relationship with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior?

"The ordinary, external ways Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption are his regulations, particularly the word, **sacraments**, and prayer, all of which are made effective for the salvation of his chosen ones." (Shorter Catechism Question 88, emphasis added)

What is a Sacrament?

"A sacrament is a holy regulation established by Christ, in which Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers by physical signs." (Shorter Catechism Q 92)

Two Sacraments in the Presbyterian Church: What are they?

"The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper." (Shorter Catechism Q 93)

What is Baptism?

"The sacrament of baptism is a washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which is a sign and seal that we are joined to Christ, that we receive the benefits of the covenant of grace, and that we are engaged to be the Lord's." (Shorter Catechism Q 94)

Who Should Be Baptized?

"Those who are not members of churches should not be baptized until they have publicly stated that they believe in Christ and will obey Him, **but the infant children of church members should be baptized.**" (Shorter Catechism Q 95, emphasis added)

First Presbyterian Church

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