

Baptized into

the Faith



APOSTLE'S CREED

**I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand
of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.**

Amen



Your child's baptism is an important event for you and your church. In presenting your child for baptism, you are identifying him or her with the community of God's people, His Church, and you are making a promise to God. We want to do everything we can to make this a special time for you.

THE MEANING OF INFANT BAPTISM

Baptism is not something we do to our children, it is something we do for them. Baptism is a sign of God's new covenant with His people. It is a covenant (promise) we enter into with God regarding our children in response to His invitation, "Let the little children come unto me," (Mt. 19:14) and the admonition from the Apostle Peter who said, "For the promise (of God) is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him." (Acts 2:39) So, we baptize our children believing that if we as parents live out what it means to follow Christ and if God's Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of our children, they will one day come to claim Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

Baptism is a sign of God's involvement with humankind. When you have your child baptized, you enter into a three-way promise. It is a promise between (1) God, (2) the parents and (3) the Church community.

1. The first part of the covenant of baptism is the overwhelming promise of God's gracious love to a child. This love is extended to the child even before he or she is aware or able to respond. Further, God promises to be at work in the child, drawing him or her toward faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism does not promise a child's salvation. The question is often asked, "Do Presbyterians believe that baptism 'saves' a person?" The answer is that baptism is only effective when it is accompanied by faith in the life of the individual believer.
2. The second part of the covenant is that you promise to raise your child as a Christian. This means that you will teach your child about the Christian faith, include your child in activities of the church so as to expose him/her to the truth of the Gospel, and that your life will be an example of what it means to follow Jesus Christ.
3. The third part of the covenant is that God gives us the community of His people, the Church, to help us raise our children as Christians. During the baptism the congregation promises to join with you in the responsibility of teaching your child about the Christian faith. That is why baptism is performed during the worship service. As a part of the promise the congregation agrees to provide nurturing care and Biblical instruction. They also promise that as individuals their lives will reflect the values of one who follows Christ. Whenever your child sees them, whether at church or in the community, what he or she has learned at home will be reinforced by what is seen in the lives of God's people.

As your child grows we believe that the salvation offered by God in Christ must be individually claimed. Often this takes place for baptized children in a confirmation class for young people, where they personally claim the faith into which they were baptized. The confirmation class at First Presbyterian is specifically designed not only to teach children about the history and traditions of our faith, but also enable young persons to articulate a personal faith in Jesus Christ as their own Savior and Lord, thus claiming the promises that began with their baptism.

Baptism, then, is an act of faith by the believing parents of a child and the community of God's people who ask God to be at work in all of their children, drawing them toward a day when they want to individually claim Jesus Christ as their own.

One question that is sometimes asked by parents is, "If I have my child baptized now, will he/she be able to be baptized again when they trust in Christ themselves if he/she wants to do so?" The Presbyterian Church takes its instruction from one of the earliest church councils that wrestled with this issue. They observed that to re-administer the sacrament of baptism would be to say that God had not been faithful at the first baptism when the person's faith attests to exactly the opposite fact; indeed God has been at work in this child's life, drawing them to faith. For this reason, Presbyterian ministers will decline to "re-baptize" persons who have already been baptized.

If you have further questions about the sacrament of infant baptism, one of our pastors will be happy to visit with you.

MEMBERSHIP

Baptism is a covenant between parents, their church and God. The Book of Order states that one of the parents presenting a child for baptism must be a person who holds to the Christian faith and should also be a member of the church where the child is being presented. Baptism apart from one's home congregation loses its symbolism. Therefore, it is usually inappropriate to baptize a child from another congregation in our worship services.

GODPARENTS

The tradition of Godparents has come to us primarily from the Roman Catholic and Episcopal traditions. Part of the traditional role of a Godparent is to take responsibility for the spiritual upbringing of a child in the event that parents are unable to fulfill that role. Godparents are also encouraged to supplement the spiritual education of the child given by

the parents. Within the Reformed family of faith, the congregation serves the role that Godparents serve. During the baptism the congregation commits itself to help the parents with their responsibility of raising the child and teaching him/her about the faith.

Sometimes there is a special person who has indicated a willingness to stand with the parents in their role as spiritual mentor. They volunteer to take the lead in the commitment of the congregation. It is entirely appropriate to have such a person stand with you during the baptism of your child. If you have such a person, please notify the minister performing the baptism before the service begins. He or she will be able to introduce them and share with the congregation the special role they have agreed to fill in your child's life.

GUEST MINISTERS AND ELDERS

From time to time church members have elders who have held a special place in their lives and whose presence in the baptismal service would add special meaning. We are happy to have them involved in the service as an assistant. If the elder whom you would like to assist is from another Christian church, please inform Jeanne Nifong at the time the baptism is scheduled. Only ministers from First Presbyterian Church will conduct the baptismal service. Other Christian ministers may be invited by the Senior Minister to participate in the baptism. If such a minister has held a special place in your life, we welcome his/her participation in the service. Please check this minister's schedule before contacting the church. Consult with Jeanne Nifong at the time the baptism is scheduled if you wish for a minister not presently on the staff of the church to participate in the baptism.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

As with every important moment in our lives, pictures provide vivid memories and teaching opportunities as our children grow. Therefore, families are welcome to photograph or video a child's baptism. However, baptisms are part of services of worship; therefore, a certain amount of decorum is expected. **Please have family and friends refrain from taking flash pictures during the service.** Available light (pictures without flash) or video recordings that do not require special lighting are fine. If a person is taking video, please ask them to sit in a position where they can get an adequate picture and to refrain from standing and moving around during the service. Some find the front seats in the balcony give a good angle for pictures.

Because of the schedule on Sunday morning with multiple services, the minister will make him/herself available for pictures *following the 11:15 am service* (flash is OK here). Following the 8:45 am service, the minister has only a very brief time in which he/she is available. If you desire pictures after this service it may be advisable to get your child from the nursery (if you have taken him/her there) and return during the singing of the closing hymn. Because of the 'busyness' of post-service times, it is often helpful to remind the minister that you want pictures taken.

INVITATIONS

The church provides invitations for the parents of the child being baptized to mail to family and friends. Jeanne Nifong will mail these to you at least one month prior to the date of the baptism. Typically we provide eight invitations, but if more are desired we will be happy to supply them.

BAPTISM DAY

It is best if you arrive 15 minutes before the service begins. Our hospitality volunteers will have reserved seating available to you, your family, and friends. One week prior to the baptism, Jeanne Nifong will contact you regarding the amount of reserved seating required.

At the appropriate time in the service, the minister performing the baptism will invite you to come forward. You may bring other children if you so desire.

Those who are coming to the chancel in the Sanctuary or in front of the stage in the Worship Center for the baptismal ceremony will need to sit by an aisle for easier exit. Following the baptism, parents may either return to their seats or take their child to the nursery. When returning to the Sanctuary or Worship Center, please consider other worshippers. There are several natural times to re-enter the service such as during a hymn or when the offering is being received.

Generally, we use the Apostles Creed (*see inside front cover*) as part of the baptism service. We use this creed because it defines, in a succinct way, the essentials of the Christian faith.

The questions parents are asked will be reflected from this creed. They are:

- "Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?"
- "Do you claim God's covenant promises on your child's behalf and look to the Lord for his/her salvation?"
- "Do you promise in humble reliance on God's grace and His Holy Spirit, that you will set before your child a godly example, and will you pray with and for your child so that one day he/she may confess Christ for him/herself?"

The appropriate answer to each of these questions is "We do." Parents are encouraged to speak up so that people in the congregation will be able to hear you.

The minister will either take the child from the parents or will leave him/her in their arms and ask, "What is the Christian name of this child?" Parents should respond with the name by which the child will be baptized. After the baptism the elder will offer a prayer and the parents will be presented with the child's baptism certificate and a children's Bible that is a gift from our church.

It is not uncommon for babies to cry during their baptism or do other things that are characteristic to babies. Relax. It won't be the first time it happened. After the baptism, you may either return to your seat or go straight to the nursery, and return to the service after getting your child settled.

You may also want to tell your guests about parking in the lot south of the church (2nd Street) or in the Central Parking Deck

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF INFANT BAPTISM?

The Shorter Catechism gives this definition of Baptism:

Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

The baptism of a child, like adult baptism, acknowledges that the recipient belongs to the Lord in a special way; he/she is ingrafted into Christ; he/she receives special benefits through the covenant of grace through his/her parents and their faith; and he/she is engaged to be the Lord's. All of these blessings he/she may later deny, just as an adult who is baptized may deny them.

Someone has summarized the meaning of the baptism of a child in six headings:

a. *A Recognition of a Covenant Relationship.*

Baptism does not initiate this covenant relationship, but it does publicly recognize it. This covenant is a contact, an agreement between a person and God, and it speaks of the way God desires to enter into a relationship with us and our children. We read in Scripture on many occasions of the way in which God promised blessings to His people if they would love and follow Him. God is always faithful to the covenant, even when we aren't, and His mercy is from everlasting to ever-lasting. Baptism recognizes a covenant relationship, so parents take vows at the baptism of their child. They make promises to the Lord which by God's grace they will seek to fulfill.

b. *An Expression of Thanksgiving.*

The Baptism of a child is an opportunity for the parents to thank God for this new life in the midst of their covenant community.

c. *A Symbol of Cleansing.*

The Baptism is a symbol of God's forgiveness for which the child, like his/her parents, is in need.

d. *An Acknowledgement of an Obligation.*

In Baptism each Christian parent acknowledges before God and humanity that he/she has a serious obligation to bring this child up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

e. *An experience of God's grace and love.*

In Baptism God reaches out to a child even before he/she can say His name, and in this act of grace recognizes His mark of covenant love on the child.

f. *An Act of Dedication.*

It is at this moment of Baptism that the Christian parent, like Hannah of old, gives the child back to God for His service, as He wishes to use him/her. The parents acknowledge they are not owners of the child, but *stewards under the Master*. The Christian parents realize that the child is the Lord's, placed in their care.

SCHEDULING THE BAPTISM OF YOUR CHILD

Infant baptism services will be held on the 3rd Sunday of each month unless another event was previously scheduled that we feel may take away the attention needed for this special service. In that case, another Sunday will be designated.

When possible, the pastor who has the honor of baptizing your child will make arrangements to meet with your family in the week prior to the baptism to talk about the meaning of the sacrament and to get to know your child.

Infant baptisms should be scheduled at least 4 weeks in advance. Worship services that include the following are not available for baptism scheduling: joint worship services, Palm Sunday, Easter, Youth Sunday, and other special services as they arise. Some of these activities restrict scheduling in only one service; others restrict scheduling at both services.

For questions, and to schedule your child's infant baptism, please contact the Senior Pastor's assistant, Jeanne Nifong, at 723-1621, x234 or email at JeanneN@1stpres.com.



**300 N Cherry Street,
Winston-Salem, NC 27101**

www.1stpres.com

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