

## INTRODUCTION

In the Presbyterian Church there are two sacraments that have been given to us by Jesus Christ. One is Baptism and the other is Holy Communion.

As a Sacrament Baptism is...

"An outward and visible sign of an inward and redeeming grace."  
A pledge, or a promise...

Baptism is at the center of our lives as Christians. Marking our birth as Christians, baptism is the sign of the grace of God, of the covenant God has established with us, of our participation in the death and resurrection with Christ, of our cleansing from sin, and of the presence of the Holy spirit working among us to comfort, strengthen, and empower us in God's service. As such, baptism should contribute to our spiritual growth and direct us in serving God. When the church baptizes persons in ways that evidence the centrality and importance of baptism in the Christian life, baptism will more effectively point us to God, who is the source of strength and comfort for all of life until our baptism is made complete in death.

## THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

Baptism, as ordained by Christ, is the Word made visible. It sets forth the grace of God in Jesus Christ and affirms that believers and their children are heirs of the covenant of grace. It is a consecration to the new life in Christ, which means faithful service, obedience, and participation in the joy and victory of the resurrection.

Baptism is both God's act and the people's response. In it God proclaims again the gospel and reassures the community of faith of the judging, forgiving, and redeeming love in Christ. By the work of the Holy Spirit, God marks as adopted children those who are baptized, enabling them to accept forgiveness through repentance, to affirm their new identity as members of Christ's body, and to show themselves to be the Lord's in ministry to others.

The Sacrament is a means of testifying to and receiving the reality of God's grace, and also a means by which all faithful members of the church show forth publicly their own faith and trust in God. It heralds a new beginning of participation in the ministry of Christ for all who are baptized. Children who are baptized are invited to share in the celebration of the Lord's Supper as part of the family of God. Such participation initiated in Baptism then becomes an ever-expanding process, setting Christians on a journey which lasts the whole course of their lives. As the meaning of one's own baptism becomes apparent only through the subsequent course of one's life as one practices what it means to be the Lord's in changing situations and in new relationships.

Baptism is a sign that we are a part of the community of the universal church. Thus, no single tradition of the baptismal form can exhaust the great variety and depth of the meaning of Baptism. Since Baptism signals our membership in the universal church and since its reality does not depend upon the tradition or form in which it is administered, it shall be administered only once to each person. A congregation is enriched by the administration of Baptism both to infants and to consenting believers upon public confession of faith. These complementary emphases of both practices exhibit the meaning of Baptism more fully and with less misunderstanding than if either is exclusively observed.

Baptism is an act of the whole church and a sign of entrance into it. Therefore, it regularly should be administered in the presence of the worshipping congregation. Since the Sacrament cannot be separated from the Word, it ordinarily is administered at a service in which the written Word has been expounded, setting forth the promises and benefits the Sacrament proclaims. All those present are to recall their dependence on God's grace and the common need in which they all stand, praying that God will fulfill the promises sealed to the persons being baptized, that they will be enabled to walk in newness of life, exercise the gifts of the Spirit, and be drawn closer to one another through their common acknowledgement of the need in which they stand. However, if in the judgement of the minister, circumstances justify the administration of the Sacrament apart from public worship, the congregation should be represented by at least one member of the session in addition to the minister, thereby manifesting the communal nature of Baptism. In such an event, the

minister shall remind all present that the Sacrament is not administered as an emergency measure to ensure salvation, but is a means of showing forth the redemptive power of the Word of God in Jesus Christ.

## BAPTISM IS GOD'S ACT AND OUR RESPONSE

### God's act

Proclaims Gospel of love  
(ie. God judges, forgives redeems).

Marks us as God's

In other words...

Baptism -

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

### Our response

Acknowledges truth and power of Gospel

- Accept forgiveness
- Affirms our identity
- Engage in ministry
- Begin the "process" of faith

We are not "saved" through the sacraments, but by God's gracious act in Christ.

## BAPTISM MEANS RESPONSIBILITY

### For the Parent:

Again and again you will be obliged to make decisions for your child. You will choose a neighborhood in which to live; you will choose friends; you will choose a school, a physician, playmates – every day you will make decisions involving your child, but the most important decision you have already made: your child is baptized. What remains for you is to see to it that the child grows up in love of Jesus, the Christ, responds to the challenge of his way of life, and becomes secure in the confidence that there is no drifting beyond the embrace of God's love.

## For the Congregation:

Your responsibility as a parent is to live the faith into which your child has been baptized. Your life must be saturated with prayer and patience and courage. You must be willing to venture beyond things as they are, pressing on the quest to build and uphold God's Kingdom. As you face up to your responsibility, it is good to know that you are not alone. You can turn to Christian neighbors and friends for counsel and support. More important, you have a right to expect the help of the worshiping congregation of which you are a part.

So, you are not alone in this responsibility. Wherever you go and whatever you encounter, you can summon the help of God's people to bring up this child as a follower of Jesus. Together, by prayer, patience and courage you will show this child what is good and what God expects.

## INFANT BAPTISM

Christian parents who are active in a particular congregation have the right to present their infant children for baptism as a sign and seal of God's promise to them as heirs of the covenant. In presenting a child for baptism parents affirm in public their duty to bring up the child to love and serve God. The congregation, too, promises to surround the child with their love and concern in Christ, that the child may continue in the community of the church, confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and live in God's eternal Kingdom.

## THE BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS - ADULT BAPTISM

When persons who have not been Baptized as children desire to profess their faith in Jesus Christ and become incorporated into the membership of the church as believers, they shall do so by receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

## BAPTISM A CONTINUING EVENT

Baptism is a continuing event. What has happened is that this child's life is pointed in the right direction. You can also think of baptism as being somewhat like the planting of a tree near a stream so that the seedling need neither wither nor die.

Rather, it will sink its roots deep, it will grow tall and strong, spreading out its branches in the confidence that God cares and is glad. Or, again, you can think of it as being the adoption of your child into the family of the church. Now and ever after, your child will be known by name within the community of those who love the Lord, gather about His table, and order their lives according to His purposes.

## THE SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

Water is symbolic - As a necessary element to all life, and as a cleansing agent.  
The Holy Spirit - as the dynamic and living presence of God.

## HOW BAPTISM IS CELEBRATED

Sprinkling, or pouring - (cleansing)  
Immersion - (death, burial and resurrection of Christ)

## ARRANGING BAPTISMS

1. To arrange for the Sacrament of Baptism one should make contact with the church office. Dates for Baptism are scheduled for particular Sundays by the Session throughout the year. Arrangements for dates other than those suggested in First Family Yearbook and through The Herald need to be made in consultation with the Pastor(s).
2. All baptisms must be approved by the Session. This helps assure them that at least one of the parents or guardians is a professing Christian and an active member of a Christian congregation and that proper counseling on the meaning of baptism has taken place.
3. Baptism should normally be administered before the congregation of which the parents are presently members.
4. Except under extenuating circumstances, infant Baptism should be administered in the presence of the congregation during a regular service of worship.

5. Since the entire congregation assumes responsibility for the growth of the child, particular godparents are not necessary.

6. Parents wishing baptism for their child(ren) will be asked to meet with the pastor to discuss the meaning and purpose of baptism. Those who have previously had such instruction need not attend again unless they choose.

### SCRIPTURAL ALLUSIONS TO BAPTISM

New Testament - Matthew 3:13-17 - the Baptism of our Lord  
Luke 3:21-22 - " " " "  
Mark 1:9-11 - " " " "  
1 Cor. 12:12-13 - means of incorporation  
Galatians 3:26-29 - putting on Jesus Christ  
Romans 6:1-4 - dying with Christ  
Colossians 2:9-13 - summary  
Mark 16:16 and Matthew 28:19 - the great commission  
Acts 16:15,33 and 18:8 - household

#### SOURCES:

THE DIRECTORY FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD (1988-89) The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

HOLY BAPTISM AND SERVICES FOR THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISM:

SUPPLEMENTAL LITURGICAL RESOURCE 2.References:

Published by the Worship and Music Committee of Session

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Adopted by the Session 7/1998

Reviewed/Revised 3/2012

Reviewed/Approved by Session 6/26/13

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# **AN ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

## **THE INTRODUCTION**

### **QUESTIONS OF INTENTION AND AFFIRMATION**

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

As disciples of Jesus Christ, will you seek to deepen your own faith that you may be a Christian example for your child?

Will you encourage your child's Christian faith that she/he will grow to love God and neighbor, to follow our Lord's teachings and seek the fellowship of the church?

### **CONGREGATIONAL QUESTION OF INTENTION**

Our Lord Jesus Christ ordered us to teach those who are baptized. Do you, the people of the church, promise to tell all the good news of the gospel, to help them know all that Christ commands, and by your fellowship build a community of faith and love to strengthen their family ties with the household of God?

### **CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

In recognition of this commitment and intention, let us express the faith of the fellowship into which these disciples are being gathered.

Do you believe in God the Father?

*We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.*

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

*We believe 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 at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

*We 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.*

**THE POURING OF THE WATER  
PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING  
THE BAPTISM  
THE PRESENTATION**

**THE STATEMENT OF WELCOME**

With joy and thanksgiving we acknowledge that your child is part of Christ's church; we are all one in Christ; we promise to love, encourage and support you and to share the good news of Jesus Christ with you that you may know and follow Him.

**THE PRESENTATION OF THE BAPTISMAL CANDLE**

Receive the light of Christ; you have passed from darkness into light.

*You have been enlightened by Christ, walk always as children of the light.*

**THE PRESENTATION OF THE BAPTISMAL CANDLE AND PRAYER  
SHAWL**

Receive the light of Christ; you have passed from darkness into light.

*You have been enlightened by Christ, walk always as children of the light. Receive this prayer shawl as a symbol of our prayers and love. Be enfolded in the everlasting embrace of our loving God.*

(7/98)

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Reviewed/Revised 3/2012

**A GUIDE**  
**FOR THE**  
**BAPTISM OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

**THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**Bay City, Michigan**

## MEMO

To: Those who are going to have their children baptized  
From: Dr. Jeffrey Weenink  
Subject: Baptism

Date:

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Dear

The Session has approved your request for baptism. It is the church's responsibility to make sure that you understand baptism and that we can collectively fulfill our baptismal vows. Therefore, representatives from the Board of Elders will meet with you at 9:15 a.m. on the Sunday designated for baptism, which is \_\_\_\_\_.

In advance, please find three pieces of information which will be helpful to you. The first is a scriptograph book on baptism; the second is the church's published guide for baptism; and the third is a list of six questions which you should reflect on as that will be the topic of conversation as you gather with the elders on the designated baptism day. Our goal is to make this time of preparation productive and meaningful.

We look forward to seeing you on \_\_\_\_\_.

1. How will you personally seek to fulfill the baptismal vow that is made to help your child know, love and serve God?
2. What kinds of things will you do?
3. How can the church best help you to fulfill these promises?
4. What motivates you to have your child baptized?
5. Why is it important?
6. Do you have any questions about the meaning and significance of baptism?

c: Sacrament/baptism guide (7/98)  
Reviewed/Revised 3/2012

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
805 Center Ave., Bay City, Michigan 48708

INFORMATION NEEDED FOR BAPTISM OF CHILDREN:

**FULL NAME OF CHILD TO BE BAPTIZED:**

\_\_\_\_\_

First	Middle	Last
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**Date of Birth** \_\_\_\_\_

**Born in:**

\_\_\_\_\_

City	State
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**Father's Full Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

First	Middle	Last
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**Mother's Full Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

First	Middle	Last
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**Present Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_