



INFORMATION PACKET FOR THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
35 PARK PLACE • SILVER CREEK, NY 14136 • (716) 934-2018

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Pastor





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INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS BAPTISM?

We believe that Baptism is a visible sign of the love we receive from a seemingly invisible God. It is the sign and seal of one's entering into the faith community that we call body of Jesus Christ, namely the Church. The *Book of Order*¹ of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) tells us that Jesus, through his own Baptism², identified himself with the community of God's children in order to fulfill the will of God. In Baptism, the one baptized ceremonially participates in the death and resurrection of Jesus in that he or she dies to what separates him or her from God (namely, sin) and is raised to newness of life in Jesus Christ.

Baptism is considered by our church and denomination to be a *sacrament*, which are "signs of the real presence and power of Christ in the Church, symbols of God's action."³ Denominations often differ over what they recognize as sacraments. Some recognize as many as seven sacraments (the Roman Catholic Church); others have no sacraments in the life of the church (Baptist). The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper (also called Communion or the Eucharist). The *Book of Order* states:

Through the Sacraments, God seals believers in redemption, renews their identity as the people of God, and marks them for service. (*Book of Order* W-1.3033(2))

The early Church, following Jesus, took three primary material elements of life—water, bread, and wine—to become basic symbols of offering life to God as Jesus had offered his life. Being washed with the water of Baptism, Christians received new life in Christ and presented their bodies to be living sacrifices to God. Eating bread and drinking wine they received the sustaining presence of Christ, remembered God's covenant promise, and pledged their obedience anew. (*Book of Order* W-1.3033(1))

In Matthew 28:18-20, the resurrected Jesus Christ shared the following commandment with his disciples:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (NRSV)

The *Book of Order* further states that "Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is God's gift of grace and also God's summons to respond to that grace. Baptism calls to repentance, to faithfulness, and to discipleship. Baptism gives the church its identity and commissions the church for ministry to the world." (*Book of Order* W-2.3006)

Baptism is an act of God's grace and mercy in welcoming the one being baptized into the ministry and community of faith, and is done in recognition of that person as a child of God—a creation of God and one of God's own.

¹ The *Book of Order* is Part II of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and contains the rules and guidelines of our church government from the local church, through the presbytery and synod, to the General Assembly. The General Assembly is the national level of our church government and encompasses all the presbyteries in the United States. Part I of the constitution of the PC(USA) is the *Book of Confessions* which holds significant confessions which have been written through the centuries in particular times, addressing particular issues.

² Matthew 3.13-17; Mark 1.9-11; Luke 3.21-22; John 1.29-34.

³ *Book of Order*, W-1.3033(2)



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WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE WATER?

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit binds the Church in covenant to its Creator and Lord. In the Judeo-Christian heritage water plays an important role in both the secular and religious lives its people. In Baptism the water symbolizes the waters of creation in Genesis 1 and 2, the flood from which God saved Noah in Genesis 6-9, and of when God used Moses to bring the people of Israel out of captivity and escape from Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus). Thus, the water of Baptism links us to the goodness of God's creation and to the grace of God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses and all of Israel (that is, God's children). Prophets of Israel, amidst the failure of their generations to honor God's covenant, called for justice to "roll down like waters" and "righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). They envisioned a fresh expression of God's grace and of creation's goodness—a new covenant accompanied by the sprinkling of cleansing water. In his ministry, Jesus offered the gift of "living water." So, Baptism is the sign and seal of God's grace and covenant in Christ, and water represents the purifying and saving reaching out of God to all of humanity.⁴

WHAT ABOUT BAPTIZING INFANTS OR CHILDREN?

The Bible declares that God claimed humanity as God's own "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love. According to our tradition, children of believers are to be baptized "without undue delay, but without undue haste." Baptism, whether administered to those who profess their faith (adult baptism) or to those presented for Baptism as children (infant baptism), is one and the same Sacrament. The Baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith.⁵

Baptism, therefore, often occurs within the first few months of life, though a person may be baptized at any age. Parents bring their baby to church, where they publicly declare their desire that their child be baptized. When an infant or child is baptized the congregation, on behalf of the universal church, commits itself to nurture the child in faith. When adults are baptized they make a public profession of faith, and the congregation again commits itself to the spiritual nourishment of the one baptized. Baptism distinguishes children of those who believe in God's redemptive power from children of nonbelievers.

WHAT IF I OR MY CHILD WAS BAPTIZED IN ANOTHER CHURCH?

We believe that Baptism is received only once—once baptized always baptized; once received into the body of Christ, always a part of the body of Christ. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recognizes all Baptisms administered by other Christian churches so long as it is done with water and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit⁶. If you have been baptized in another Christian church, there is no need to be re-baptized. In the case of one already baptized, we will perform a ceremony whereby one's baptism and the vows taken during that baptism will be reaffirmed.

WHAT IS THE ORDER OF CEREMONY AND WHAT QUESTIONS WILL BE ASKED?

The order of worship is listed below along with the questions that are asked either of an adult being baptized or the parents of an infant being baptized. Adults who wish to be baptized prior to their confession of faith to become members of our congregation will answer similar questions about their faith and reliance upon God in

⁴ *Book of Order* W-2.3003

⁵ *Book of Order* W-2.3008

⁶ *Book of Order* W-2.3010



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their lives. In addition there is a question asked of the congregation who will, with the parents, pray for the child or adult being baptized, help them grow in the faith, and walk in the faith journey with the newly baptized.

Order of Worship for Baptism

Baptismal Hymn (*Verses 1 & 2*)

Invitation

Baptismal Litany

Questions to the Parents of a Child to be Baptized

1. In presenting your child for Baptism, do you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love? **(I do)**
2. Do you wish *him/her* to be baptized in Christ's name? **(I do)**
3. Do you promise, in dependence on the grace and power of God, to bring your child up in the Christian faith so that one day *s/he* may come to confess *his/her* faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? **(I do)**
4. Will you live before your child a life, which exhibits the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ so that seeing your example *s/he* may desire for *him-/herself* to be Christ's disciple? **(I will with God's help)**
5. Will you keep your child under the ministry and guidance of this church until *s/he*, by the power of God, shall be confirmed as a responsible member of the church. **(I do)**

Questions to the One being Baptized (Adult)

1. Do you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love? **(I do)**
2. Do you wish to be baptized in His name? **(I do)**
3. Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world? **(I do)**
4. Do you promise, in dependence on the grace and power of God, to be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love? **(I do)**
4. Will you live a life which exhibits the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ? **(I will with God's help)**

Question to the Congregation

Elder: Our Lord Jesus has commanded us to teach those who are baptized in his name. Do you, the members of this congregation, promise to declare God's word to this child, to love *him/her* and to pray for *him/her*, that by God's grace, *s/he* may be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, Our Lord?

People: We do.

Baptism

Thanksgiving Over the Water

The Baptism (three handfuls of water are sprinkled over the head of the one being baptized)

The Laying on of Hands & Prayer

Introduction to the Congregation

Baptismal Hymn (*Verse 3*)

If you have any questions regarding the above, please be sure to contact the pastor to set up a time to meet. It is important that you know what you are doing in Baptism and what you are asking the congregation to do in baptism. We are excited about your wanting to be baptized and looking forward to a new member of our family in Jesus Christ.



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CHILD/INFANT BAPTISM REQUEST FORM

(For parents who wish for their children under an age of reason to be baptized)

This form to be turned in to Church office the third Wednesday of the month prior to date of Baptism..

(Please type or use a pen and print clearly)

PARENT INFORMATION

MOTHER Birthmother Step-mother Other: _____

FATHER Birthfather Step-father Other: _____

First Name _____ Middle Name _____ Last Name _____

First Name _____ Middle Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____ Birthdate _____ / _____ / _____

Address _____ Birthdate _____ / _____ / _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

() - () -
Home Phone Work Phone

() - () -
Home Phone Work Phone

Member Non-member Member of other church: _____

Member Non-member Member of other church: _____

Religious Affiliation (Faith or denomination name) _____

Religious Affiliation (Faith or denomination name) _____

Notes: _____

Notes: _____

BAPTISM INFORMATION

Full name of child to be baptized: _____
First Name Middle Name Last Name

Birthdate of Child _____ Location of Birth (City, State) _____ 1st Choice for Baptism Date _____ 2nd Choice for Baptism Date _____ 3rd Choice for Baptism Date _____

SPONSORS OR GODPARENTS

NOTE: If you choose to give your child sponsors or godparents, they will be invited up during the baptism and asked the same questions as you. Normally, the legal guardians of a child serve as the child's sponsors for baptism. Please talk with the pastor if you wish to have sponsors or godparents listed on your child's Certificate of Baptism.

Names of Sponsors, if applicable (must be members of FUPC):

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
_____	_____	() - _____
_____	_____	() - _____

Names of Godparents, if applicable (must be members of a Christian church):

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
_____	_____	() - _____
_____	_____	() - _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

Minister Consult: _____ / _____ / _____

Session Approval: _____ / _____ / _____

Baptism/Membership: Approved Not approved (referred for pastoral counseling)



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ADULT BAPTISM REQUEST FORM

(For those who are of an age of reason and able to make faith decisions for themselves)

This form to be turned in to Church office the third Wednesday of the month prior to date of Baptism.

(Please type or use a pen and print clearly)

PERSONAL INFORMATION

_____/_____/_____
 First Name Middle Name Last Name Birthdate

 Address

_____/_____/_____
 City State Zip Code Home Phone Work Phone

 Previous Religious Affiliation(s) (Faith or denomination)

Notes: _____

BAPTISM INFORMATION

_____/_____/_____
 1st Choice for Baptism Date 2nd Choice for Baptism Date 3rd Choice for Baptism Date

SPONSOR(S)

NOTE: All adults being baptized are required to have sponsors chosen by the Session on your behalf. If you already know your sponsor's name, please indicate below. Your sponsor will be taking vows to support you and pray for you and be a source of encouragement for you in your faith journey.

Name(s) of Sponsor(s), if applicable (must be members of FUPC):

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>PHONE NUMBER</u>
_____	_____	() - _____
_____	_____	() - _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

NOTES: _____

Minister Consult: ____/____/____

Session Interview: ____/____/____

Baptism/Membership: Approved Not approved (referred for pastoral counseling)

Date Received by Profession of Faith: ____/____/____