



KNOX
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BAPTIZING YOUR CHILD

*"Let the little children
come to me,
and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of heaven
belongs to such as these."
-Jesus*

We're delighted to know you're interested in having your child baptized at Knox Presbyterian Church! One of our core values of Knox is: "Kids Grow Here." We believe that passing the Christian faith onto the next generation is crucial. We welcome and support families of all kinds to help kids of all ages build a faith that lasts. Making the choice to have your child baptized is an important part of that journey.

As the parent(s) of the child to be presented for baptism, your interest shows that you value your child's relationship with Jesus and the church. Before you begin to make specific plans about dates or other details, please read this booklet to gain a better understanding of what Christian baptism means, how it's practiced in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and what commitments are involved. It will help you know the general approach we take to baptizing children at Knox Presbyterian Church. Our official policy for infant baptism may be found in the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Ordinarily, the first step in your child's baptism is for you to establish a regular pattern of family worship at Knox Presbyterian Church, and for one or both parents to be committed to following Jesus Christ as active members of this congregation. In our Presbyterian understanding, the whole congregation makes a commitment to your family; to support you and your child as together we experience and grow in God's grace. This extended church family is a wonderful support system for you and your child.

Why We Baptize the Children of Believers

The primary reason for baptizing infants and children is as a response to Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20:

"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, even to the end of the age."

Presbyterians like to speak about baptism as a covenant. A covenant is a solemn agreement with God that is sealed with a binding vow. It is the most serious agreement a human being can make. We believe that the children of believers are included in the covenant of baptism.

In Acts 2:39, when believers and their families were being instructed to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, we read:

"For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

At Knox Presbyterian Church, we are serious about the responsibility of helping children come to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ. The covenant of baptism is an important step in that process. Because God's grace precedes and calls forth our response of faith, it is normal in the Presbyterian Church (USA) for parents who are followers of Jesus Christ and active church members to present their children for baptism as infants and very young children. While active members need have no hesitation about bringing your child to be baptized as an infant, baptism is possible at any age.

Some parents prefer to wait until the child is able to personally answer the baptismal questions, rather than to speak for their child. In baptizing children, we trust that eventually God will bring them to a time in their lives when they want to embrace their baptism by making their own public profession of faith before the church, and by covenanting to be adult members of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

There are four parties to the covenant of infant baptism: God, the child, the parents, and the congregation.

- God's commitment is to claim your child in love, and to be faithful to him or her. In baptism God reaffirms covenant with us and our children. By the Holy Spirit, we are set apart for God, who calls us by name and puts a sign on us to show that we belong to Christ. As we live out our baptism, God forgives our sin, frees us from death, and gives us new birth by uniting us with Jesus Christ through faith. We are sealed by God's Spirit and adopted into the covenant family of the church. In being united with Christ in baptism, we are also united with all the people of God as brothers and sisters in Christ. Baptism enacts and seals what God's Word proclaims: the redeeming grace of God offered to all people, children, and adults alike. (Book of Order)
- Your child's responsibility is to respond to God in faith and obedience as he or she grows in divine grace.
- Your commitment as a parent is to bring your child to church often, raise your child in the Christian faith, pray with and for him or her daily, teach him or her the meaning of baptism, and participate together in weekly worship, Christian education, and church activities.
- The members of the congregation make a solemn commitment to pray for your child, to teach him or her the Christian faith, to love and nurture your family, and to be examples of Christian discipleship.

Children, parents, and congregation all rely on God's grace to fulfill the responsibilities of baptism. Since the promises made in the covenant of baptism constitute its very essence, if the human commitments above cannot be kept with sincerity and integrity, it is best for the family to wait until the child is old enough to be baptized at his or her own initiative as a young adult.

Misconceptions About Baptism

There are certain reasons people sometimes present their children for baptism that indicate misconceptions about its Biblical and Reformed meaning:

The idea that infant baptism is right for every child.

Presbyterians believe that the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ are offered without condition to all. At Knox Presbyterian Church, we seek to extend God's own welcome to each person who wants to be a part of our extended family, wherever they may be in their personal faith journey. Within this welcoming context, infant baptism involves the considered resolve of a parent to enter into a solemn covenant with God, your child, and your congregation. If, after prayerful consideration, you feel you are ready to trust God to help you live by the baptismal vows, we encourage you to present your child for baptism. If, after prayer and reflection, you are unsure about taking these vows, we encourage you to take time to cultivate your own and your child's Christian faith and church connections. In this case, it is best to wait until your child is ready to decide for him or herself to be a baptized Christian as a young adult.

Fear that in case of accident or illness, a child may not go to heaven.

We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism is a powerful sign of this grace. But it is neither a guarantee of automatic salvation, nor a necessary condition for salvation. While the seed of faith (the Holy Spirit) is communicated in baptism, God must water and nourish this seed in the context of our commitment to our child's worship and Christian education. Ultimately, we must entrust our child's eternal destiny to his or her loving heavenly Father.

Loyalty to a church which is based primarily in the past.

Some parents think, "Since this is the church I grew up in, my child should be baptized here too." It is right to want your child to be baptized in your church. However, this sentiment must be coupled with your own present active participation in the life of that church if the infant baptism of your child is to have its intended meaning. If you have moved away from this area, it is important to establish a new church home where you live now. It is usually most appropriate and helpful for your child's Christian nurture to present your child for baptism in your new congregation, where your family can participate regularly in the church's life and worship.

Pressure from other family members, or a desire to honor longstanding family traditions.

When sought by believing parents who are active church members, infant baptism is certainly a deeply meaningful tradition. However, it has more to do with uniting your child with God's family (the church) than with pleasing the child's grandparents, uncles and aunts, or other relatives. Baptism is a solemn covenant between God, your child, your church, and you as (a) parent(s); not something to be done primarily to honor or please others.

Confusion between infant baptism and "dedication" or "christening" ceremonies conducted in other churches.

You, or your family, may have connections with, or background in, a church which baptizes only adults, and "dedicates" infants. In this case, it is important for you to prayerfully decide which approach is right for you. In the Presbyterian understanding, baptism is only to be received once. It connects your child in covenant with the congregation in which he or she is baptized, as a "baptized member." Your decision should be based on careful consideration of the meaning of baptism and Christian faith in each church tradition, and honest evaluation of your intentions as to which will be most important for your child's Christian growth and training. The church in which you and your children will be most active is the best place for his or her baptism, according to the theology of that tradition.

Preparation For Baptism

- Pray daily for your child and set an example of Christian faith and commitment for your child.
- Begin to teach your child to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ.
- Bring your child to church regularly, develop a personal relationship with our pastors, and talk together with one or both of them about your desire to have your child baptized.
- Be consistently active and involved in worship and other church activities.
- After reading this booklet carefully, prayerfully seek God's guidance as you consider presenting your child for baptism.
- As God leads you, speak with one of the pastors at church about making specific plans for a baptism.
- Attend one of our quarterly baptism classes
- Meet with one of the pastors to discuss your faith, your involvement in the church, and your child's baptism. Check the church calendar, agreeing on possible dates for the baptism
- Prayerfully study and internalize the baptismal questions and promises.
 - Do you believe in one God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
 - Do you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?
 - Understanding promises God has made to us in baptism, do you desire for (name of your child) to be baptized this day?
 - Relying on God's grace, will you raise (name of your child) in the love and grace of Jesus Christ, to the end that he/she, one day, will make his/her own personal profession of faith?

After Baptism

- Continue to participate regularly in worship and to be active in the life of the church with your child. We are warmly welcoming of children in worship, and happy to have "baby sounds" in the service as a testimony to Jesus' own welcoming of children to himself. You may also bring your child to our nursery.
- Help your child begin friendships with the children of the church.
- Pray for your child and begin to pray out loud with your child. Read the Bible to your child and talk about the meaning of the stories, using both a children's story Bible and an accessible Bible translation.
- Bring your child regularly to church programming such as Sunday School, Wednesday Nights and other church activities as they reach each appropriate age
- Put the date of your child's baptism on your calendar and celebrate it annually.
- Pray regularly for the day when your child will embrace his/her own baptism by making a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and by becoming an adult member of the church.



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