

Baptisms
at
Rye Presbyterian Church

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What is Baptism?

Baptism is one of the two sacraments recognized by the Presbyterian Church and is the entrance of a person into the church. It is prefigured in the Old Testament, and instituted by Christ, when, after his resurrection, he commanded the disciples to “go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

As a sacrament, baptism is an outer sign that confers an inward grace. As Paul teaches in his letters, it is by baptism that the believer is ingrafted into Christ. In baptism, then, one dies to sin in Christ’s death, and is now risen to live in the risen Christ. Thus baptism is more than an entry ceremony into the church, or a mere symbolic washing away of sin. It is, by the Spirit, a matter of living in Christ and Christ’s life in us. All the baptized, as Paul makes clear, constitute the body of Christ.

Baptism not only ingrafts us into Christ, it gives us access to Christ’s continual sacramental feeding of his people in holy communion. By Christ’s own presence to us in this sacrament we grow and are strengthened in faith, and hope, and love. Thus baptism is the beginning of the Christian life, a life that hopes for God’s kingdom and that stands by the world for its redemption even as Christ stood by the world.

It is our understanding in the Reformed tradition, of which the Presbyterian Church is a part, that that God’s love is not earned, but a gift. In baptism, we are given something. Therefore, because it is a freely given gift that comes before we are even able to respond, infant baptism is not only practiced, but a visible sign of truly unmerited grace, since the child can make no response to the grace of God. In time, however, the child will be asked to hold this grace in faith, and baptism is to lead to this time.

In God’s gift of grace in baptism and in the adult acceptance and affirmation of God’s grace, is the full picture of God’s action in us. Adult baptism, therefore, is not done to make up for a previous omission, but it is an occasion for great celebration in the life of the church.

Because adult confession of faith completes baptism, children who are baptized usually prepare for confirmation in the ninth grade, at which time they, too, will publically declare their faith and intent. Confirmation signifies a young person’s desire to enter into the full life and ministry of the congregation, and a taking upon him or herself the promises made earlier by his/her parents.

Who May Be Baptized

Any adult person may present him or herself for baptism. Upon instruction in the Christian faith, he or she may be baptized upon profession of faith, and becomes a member of Christ's church and Rye Presbyterian Church.

A parent who is a member of Rye Presbyterian may present his or her child for baptism. Only one parent need be a member to request baptism for a child. The parent promises to teach the Christian faith to his or her child, and the congregation vows to nurture and support the child in his/her faith development. If the parents wish to have Godparents for their child(ren), they will also promise their nurture and support.

Any young person of confirmation age, generally ninth grade, who has not been baptized as a child, may present him/herself for baptism. Upon completion of the instruction in the confirmation class, or a satisfactory alternative, he or she will be baptized and then confirmed with the class.

Since baptism is the inclusion of a person in the Christian communion, it is necessary to have been baptized before becoming a member of Rye Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church understands that baptism is only to be administered once in a person's life; it does not matter whether baptism has been by immersion or by water touched to the forehead. The Presbyterian Church, USA recognizes baptism administered by Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox traditions.

How Baptisms May Be Arranged

Baptisms are performed at a service of public worship. The Presbyterian Church does not allow private baptisms.

Dates for administering baptisms are subject to the Church's master calendar and should be scheduled in advance through the church office. At RPC, baptism is usually celebrated on the last Sunday of the month. Inquiries about scheduling a baptism can be directed to the Church Secretary. The secretary can send you a baptism application.

When the date of the baptism has been confirmed, one of the pastors will call you to discuss specific baptismal arrangements.

The Service of Baptism

Persons desiring baptism or parent(s) bringing a child or children for baptism at a service of public worship may be escorted into the service by a Deacon, whom they will meet in the Library 15 minutes before the service begins. If sponsors or godparents are present, they will

accompany those presented for baptism. Front row seating can be arranged for other family members if requested ahead of time. ***We ask that photographs not be taken during the service.***

ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENT

The baptismal liturgy from the Presbyterian Book of Common *Worship* (1993) consists of:

- A brief introductory statement by the pastor of the meaning of baptism in the life of the Church.
- Presentation to the congregation of those to be baptized.
- Promises or vows by the baptismal candidate or parents, godparents, and the congregation.

For adults and children of age:

Pastor: Putting your whole trust in the grace and love of Jesus Christ, do you desire to be baptized?

Response: I do.

For parents:

Pastor: Putting your whole trust in the grace and love of Jesus Christ, do you desire to have your child baptized?

Response: I do.

Pastor: Will you be responsible for nurturing the child you present in the faith and life of the Christian community?

Response: I will, with God's help.

For the godparents/sponsors (if present):

Pastor: Will you, by your prayers and witness, support this child in their Christian nurture?

Response: I will, with God's help.

For the congregation (led by the Deacon):

Deacon: Do you, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture this child by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging him/her to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of his church?

Response: We will, with God's help.

The congregation will then affirm its faith by reciting the Apostles' Creed. A pastor will offer a Prayer of Thanksgiving over the water.

The candidates for baptism will be asked by a pastor "What is your Christian name?" or, in the case of an infant, "What is the Christian name of this child?" Having been named, baptismal water will be poured or sprinkled on the head of the candidate with the accompanying words by a pastor: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Each newly-baptized person will then be presented with a baptismal candle lit from the Christ candle.

When a pastor introduces the newly-baptized person to the congregation, the Deacon will lead:
“Receive the light of Christ, you have passed from the darkness into light,”

The congregation responds:

You have been enlightened with Christ;

Walk always as a child of the light.

The baptismal liturgy concludes with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Information for Baptism

Please fill out and return to the church

Today's Date _____

Child's Full Name _____

Date and Place of Child's Birth _____

Father's Full Name _____

Father's Church Affiliation _____

Mother's Full Name (and Maiden) _____

Mother's Church Affiliation _____

Date of Baptism desired _____

Full Names and Addresses of Godparents/sponsors, if any:

Parents' Address: _____

Parents' Telephone _____ Parent email _____

Additional Information: _____

