



The Sacrament of Baptism

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Baptism

*The Presbyterian Church in Morristown
Morristown, New Jersey*

What is baptism?

Baptism is one of the two sacraments celebrated by the Presbyterian Church. (Communion is the other). Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Christian life. The washing with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the sign of a person's inclusion in the covenant of God's people and union with the risen Christ. Thus, baptism highlights the fundamental Presbyterian conviction that God always takes the initiative in redeeming us, that we are saved by God's grace through faith and that neither the act of baptism, nor the decision to be baptized, confers salvation. These are responses to God's grace already given and at work in one's life.



What does baptism look like?

Baptism is a faith celebration shared by the whole community of believers (the congregation). There are several parts to the rite of baptism. First, parents bring their child forward for baptism during the service and promise to help him or her grow in faith. Adults ask to be baptized. Second, the entire congregation promises to love and care for the newly baptized as brothers and sisters in a new family and to provide an example of faith and love. Third, the congregation stands and offers God a prayer of praise and thanks. It then calls on the Holy Spirit to make each baptism a sign of new life in Christ. Fourth, the minister says the name of the individual being baptized and the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." He or she then sprinkles water over the individual's head. Finally, the minister welcomes the newly baptized person into the congregation and proclaims him or her a member of God's family.

Who is eligible?

The Presbyterian Church in Morristown has an inclusive baptism philosophy. Within the guidelines of the Presbyterian Book of Order, our church welcomes members who desire baptism for themselves or for their children.

Do I have to be a member of the church to be baptized or to have a member of my family baptized?

Yes. As baptism is union with Christ, so it is union with Christ's body, the church. Those presenting children for baptism will promise to provide nurture and guidance within this community of faith and ordinarily will be active members of the congregation. If one or both of the persons presenting an infant for baptism wishes to inquire about membership, they may begin attending worship at any time and may arrange to speak to a pastor.

How do I receive the sacrament of baptism as an adult?

The first step toward baptism as an adult is to attend a series of Inquirer's Classes at The Presbyterian Church in Morristown. This is a forum in which we talk about the basics of Christian faith, the characteristics and history of the Presbyterian Church and the meaning of membership at The Presbyterian Church in Morristown. Once the Inquirer's Classes are complete, you will be received into membership through baptism during a Sunday worship service. For more information on the Inquirer's Classes, please contact the church office.

How can I arrange for my child to be baptized?

If you are already a member of The Presbyterian Church in Morristown, contact the church office. You will be enrolled in the next series of Baptism Classes. At that time the class instructor will discuss the meaning of infant baptism with you to ensure that you understand the intention of the vows you will take.

If you are not a member, the first step to having your child baptized is for you to join The Presbyterian Church in Morristown by attending the next series of Inquirer's Classes and then being received into membership during a Sunday Worship Service.

What is involved with the Baptism Classes?

The Baptism Class series is made up of two classes — one in the “classroom” and one in the sanctuary. The primary purpose of the Baptism Classes is to learn about the Sacrament of Baptism and what it means to you and/or your child. The instructor will also discuss faith development in children and how parents can partner with the church to keep baptismal promises. It is an opportunity for families to meet others in the church who are in similar stages of family life and to learn about ministries in the church serving those particular needs. The second class in the sanctuary gives families a chance to ask questions of the baptizing minister as well as understanding how the baptism will fit into the service of worship.

Can we have godparents?

The role of godparents is to take special responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the child. “Godparents” are not a specific part of the Presbyterian tradition because the entire community is charged with this role. However, if you wish to include “sponsors” who are close to your family and will be taking particular care to fulfill this spiritual responsibility to your child, they are welcome to stand with you at the font and take the baptismal vows for the child with you.

Are there scheduled baptisms or can you arrange for a private baptism?

As baptism is an initiation into the covenant community, it is imperative that the members of that community attend and participate in the service. In addition to the vows you take, the congregation vows to support you (or your child, if infant baptism) as you grow in faith. Therefore, except in extraordinary circumstances, baptisms take place as part of the regular Sunday morning worship services. To emphasize the significance and beauty of baptism, The Presbyterian Church in Morristown has established four baptism Sundays during the church annual calendar. We are happy to arrange reserved seating near the font for as many family members as you care to invite to that service.

I would like to join The Presbyterian Church in Morristown, but I was baptized in another non-Presbyterian Christian church. Do I need to be baptized again?

No. The Presbyterian Church has always placed great emphasis on the unity of the Christian Church (Ephesians 4:4). We count anyone who has been baptized with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as a baptized Christian, regardless of the tradition within the Christian church that administered the baptism. To join the church, you simply need to attend an Inquirer’s Class series.

Do I have to be baptized to take Communion?

Baptism is the act of initiation into the Christian community and should take place before you receive Communion, which is the meal Christ left his followers as a means of continuing to experience his presence in their midst. It is also food and drink to strengthen Christ's followers for their lives of faith and ministry as his body in the world.

However, it is Christ's table; Jesus Christ is host. It may be that Christ is calling you through the invitation to the table. If you do respond to that invitation, you should speak with one of the ministers and arrange a time to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

What happens after baptism?

Infant baptism is just the beginning of your child's and your family's journey through the Christian faith. At The Presbyterian Church in Morristown, childcare is provided for every church service. Church school begins at the age of two and is held at 9:15 a.m. in the Parish House, September through May. Additionally, there are a variety of programs, ministries and choirs for children in grades K-12. The church employs a director of Christian Education and a director of Youth Ministry to provide leadership and support for families as children grow and develop. If you have specific questions, or would like more information, feel free to contact one of the directors through the church office.

Still have questions?

If you have other questions concerning baptism for yourself or for your child or if you would like to enroll in the next series of Baptism Classes or Inquirer's Classes, please call the church office (973-538-1776) to make an appointment with one of our ministers. They welcome the opportunity to talk with you about this important moment in the Christian life.

Scriptural Foundations for Presbyterian Baptism

Presbyterians point to the Old Testament and to a wealth of New Testament themes to understand the meaning of Christian baptism. For example, baptism is described as “participating in the dying and rising of Christ,” in which Christ broke the power of sin and death and created new life (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12). Similarly, it is a sign and seal of “rebirth in the Holy Spirit and reception of the Spirit’s power,” who gives and renews life (Acts 2:38-39; 11:16; Titus 3:5). Baptism also signifies the “washing away of sin,” and union with the risen Christ through whom God’s grace enables us to make a fresh start and, by God’s Spirit, empowers us to redirect our lives living as Christ’s body in the world (Galatians 3:28). Baptism is also an event of corporate significance as it welcomes individuals, as members of Christ’s body, into the Christian community, the church (Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9). All of these themes are at work in our understanding of the meaning of Christian baptism.





THE CHURCH STAFF

The Reverend Susan Dee Reisinger, Interim Senior Pastor

The Reverend Cynthia J. Alloway, Associate Pastor

Director of Christian Education: *Alexandra Mead*

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