

# **THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

## **Introduction**

This little booklet is intended for parents who desire to present their child for the Sacrament of Christian Baptism. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Matthew 19:14 NRSV)

We at Riverside Presbyterian Church are glad that you have shown interest in having your child baptized. We also know that important decisions like this can be a little overwhelming. Presenting a child for Baptism is an important step both for the child and for the parents. There are responsibilities and expectations for both. Riverside Presbyterian Church also has both responsibilities and expectations - both of itself and of the parents of the child and the child. This booklet is designed to help prepare you for what it means to seek the Sacrament of Baptism for your child. The Pastor of the church is available at any time for conversation or to answer your questions.

## **The Meaning of the Sacrament of Christian Baptism**

Baptism is an act of thanksgiving, an expression of gratitude for the gift of life. It is a recognition of the mystery which is at life's center.

Baptism is a sacrament of the Christian Church. It is understood to be a rite of entrance into the Church:

- \* a sign of God's renewing power in life;
- \* a sign of our welcome into God's family.

Baptism is a sign of God's love for us and a recognition of the fact that we are God's children. The congregation has a special responsibility in that all baptized persons are under its care.

In receiving the sacrament, the person being baptized and/or the parent(s) in the case of a child affirms faith in Christ as Lord and Savior, and makes the commitment to be a faithful disciple in and through the worship and work of Christ's Church.

## **Some Scripture Passages Regarding Baptism**

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." (Acts 2:37-39)

"What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:1-4)

"Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:23-29)

### **What Is the Difference Between Believer and Infant Baptism?**

Believer baptism refers to those are old enough to make their own decision and to affirm their own faith. A 14 year old is ordinarily the youngest person considered for believer's baptism. The Directory for Worship states: "such persons shall receive instruction from the Session and minister concerning the meaning of the sacrament, the nature of the church and the Christian faith, and the privileges and obligations attendant upon membership in the church ... the person shall then be presented before the congregation for baptism in a service of public worship that includes the reading, hearing, and preaching of the Word."

In the case of infant baptism one or both parents affirm their faith and their intent to guide their child in the way of discipleship. The congregation expresses its intention to share the good news of the Gospel, to help the growing child know Christ's commands and, by the fellowship of the congregation, to strengthen the family's ties with the household of God. It is expected that by their own life in the church, the parents will prepare their child for his or her own commissioning to the discipleship and ministry of Jesus Christ when reaching adolescence.

### **What Is the Significance of Water and How Is It Administered?**

Water is a symbol of cleansing in many cultures. The act of baptism by John the Baptist involved total immersion, signifying the cleansing power of the waters of the Jordan and the symbolic "dying and rising again to a new and different life." This new life is also symbolized in the giving of a name.

While baptism by total immersion is possible for Presbyterians who request it, more typically the water is applied to the head of the person being baptized.

### **When Is The Sacrament Of Baptism Administered?**

Ordinarily, the sacrament of baptism is administered during a service of public worship, most often on Sunday morning. An elder from the Session assists the Pastor by directing questions to the congregation about its responsibilities towards the newly-baptized person.

### **May It Be Administered At a Time Other Than During Public Worship?**

No, except in the case sickness or disability. The Directory of Worship states, "In such situations, all should remember that the sacrament is not administered as an emergency measure to ensure salvation, but as a means of showing the redemptive power of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. If possible, officers and other members of the congregation should be present to manifest the communal nature of the sacrament."

### **Must I/We Be a Member of Riverside Presbyterian Church To Have My/Our Child Baptized at The Church?**

Normally, we baptize only the infant children of families in which at least one parent is an active member and has publicly affirmed the Christian faith. An active member is someone currently showing some regular attendance at worship and/or participation in the life of the church. An exception may be made when and if at least one of the parents is an active member of another Christian church.

### **Must I/We Have My/Our Child Baptized?**

No. Riverside Presbyterian Church as part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms that "Session and ministers shall counsel parents that they have a responsibility for presenting their children for baptism as infants or nurturing the child toward baptism upon their own public profession of faith and commissioning to discipleship. An unbaptized child is no less loved by God.

### **If I Choose Not To Have My/Our Child Baptized Now, When Would It Be Appropriate?**

The appropriate time is when many young people participate in a Confirmation Class designed to prepare them to make their own public profession of faith. Both will happen at the same time.

### **What Is Expected of the Parent(s)?**

In presenting a child for infant baptism, the parents are expected to reaffirm their own faith in Christ, and they promise to do every thing in their power to raise their child in the Christian faith to the end that the child makes his/her own profession of faith.

### **What About God Parents?**

Presbyterians believe that the entire congregation serves as a "collective godparent" rather than individuals. In baptism the congregation is asked to undertake important responsibilities also. You are more than welcome to have family members (especially brothers and sisters of the infant) or friends be a part of the group at the front of the sanctuary.

### **Why Is An Elder Involved in the Service of Baptism?**

The Session authorizes the administration of the sacrament of baptism. The elder represents the Session and charges the congregation with the care and nurture of the baptized person. You may express a preference for a particular elder to be a part of your service of baptism.

### **How Do I Arrange for A Baptism?**

Representatives of the Session's Worship Ministry Team and the Pastor will meet with you to discuss the significance of baptism, to answer your questions, and to make arrangements. They will report to the Session, which will take action to approve the administration of the sacrament.

### **Is There A Fee for Baptism or a Contribution Expected?**

The church does not charge for the administration of the sacrament. The Session, of course, expects all active members to already be making regular financial contributions to the work of the church.

### **May I/We Take Pictures During the Service?**

Picture-taking is not permitted during services of worship. After the service you are most welcome to take all the pictures you wish.

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

For \_\_\_\_\_  
Child of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction

Litany on Psalm 78

**Pastor:** Listen, my people to my teaching, and pay attention to what I say. I am going to use wise sayings and explain mysteries from the past, things we have heard and known, things that our ancestors told us.

**People:** We will not keep them from our children; we will tell the next generation about the Lord's power and his great deeds and the wonderful things he has done.

**Pastor:** He instructed our ancestors to teach his laws to their children, so that the next generation might learn them and in turn should tell their children.

**People:** In this way they also will put their trust in God and not forget what he has done, but always obey his commandments.

\_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_:

Our friends in the faith, rejoice with us. God has blessed us with new life, creating through us a unique person, born to be loved, and to love, born to be cared for and to care, born to discover with us and through us God's love for all creation, born to become a child of God.

### Congregation:

We share your joy and praise the God and Father of us all, who gives us life, sustains us in trials of life, and calls us to become children in His kingdom. Thanks be to God for the gift of life.

### Pastor:

In Jesus Christ, God joins us together in the family of faith which is His church. He has delivered us from darkness, as He forgives our sins, and transfers us to the light of the kingdom of His beloved Son. In Jesus Christ, God has promised to be our Father, and to welcome us all, old and young alike, as brothers and sisters of Christ.

Know that the promises of God are for you and your child. By baptism God puts His sign on us to show that we belong to Him and gives to us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that His presence is always with us.

**Pastor to Parents of \_\_\_\_\_:**

Do you confess anew your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Do you trust in Him?

Do you intend your child, \_\_\_\_\_, to be His disciple, to obey His word, and show His love?

**Elder to the Congregation:**

Our Lord Jesus Christ ordered us to teach those who are baptized. Do you promise to tell this child, \_\_\_\_\_, the good news of the gospel to help him/her know all that Christ commands, and to strengthen his/her family ties with this community of faith by your fellowship?

**Congregation:** We do.

**Pastor:**

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for your faithfulness promised in this sacrament, and for the hope we have in your Son Jesus. As we baptize with water, baptize us with the Holy Spirit, so that what we say may be your word and what we do may be your work. By your power, unite us as one family, with Christ as Lord.

**Congregation:**

O God, you have called us all from death to life. We give ourselves to you, thanking you for your saving love in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Pastor:**

Child of the covenant, \_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God be with you, now and forever. Amen.

**Prayers for New Life in Christ**

**Pastor:**

Almighty God, giver of life, you call us by name and pledge to each of us your faithful love. We pray for your child, \_\_\_\_\_. Give him/her understanding, and a quick concern for others. Help him/her to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

**Elder:**

God of grace, we pray for these parents. Help them to know you, to love with your love, to teach your truth, and to tell the story of Jesus to their child, \_\_\_\_\_. Give them your grace to be your representatives in their home.

**Congregation:**

Holy God, remind us of the promise given in our baptism, and renew our trust in you. Make us strong to obey your will, and to serve this family with joy, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Benediction**

**BAPTISM CHECKLIST**  
(Please Print)

**DATE OF BAPTISM** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
                                    **First**                                    **middle**                                    **last**

**DATE OF BIRTH** \_\_\_\_\_

**PLACE OF BIRTH** \_\_\_\_\_  
  **Hospital**  **City**

**PARENTS' NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE #** \_\_\_\_\_ **EMAIL ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be on our mailing list to receive our monthly newsletter  
yes    no

**PARENTS' CHURCH** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPONSORS' NAMES** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPONSORS' CHURCH** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARTICIPATING ELDER** \_\_\_\_\_

**BAPTISMAL COUNSELING (date)** \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Fill out certificate**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Elder to sign certificate**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Copy of certificate for Clerk of Session**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Copy of certificate for pastor**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Copy of certificate for secretary / church records**

(Revised 09/18)