

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 celebration of the entrance of a person into the life of faith and the life of the church. With roots in the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus himself was baptized at the start of his ministry. In addition, after his resurrection, he commanded his 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 a “visible sign of an invisible grace,” though there are many facets of that grace, as it is both a gift and a responsibility. Baptism of a child focuses on the love of God that reaches out and welcomes us even before we can respond in faith or faithfulness. It is a welcome into the community of faith, both in the local church, and into the larger Church in all times and places. With the sign of water, in baptism we are linked to the goodness of creation, to the cleansing of the earth in the time of Noah, and to the journey of the Israelites through water into their life and covenant with God. Baptism also speaks of an end – the end of an old way and old life, and an entry into a new way of living by the power of God’s Spirit poured out upon humankind. “This is my beloved, in whom I am well pleased” was heard by Jesus at his baptism, and is to be heard by the baptized and the community of faith every time we celebrate the sacrament.

While God’s grace remains primary in any baptism, at the baptism of a child, parents make promises to live the life of faith and to teach that faith to their child. At the baptism of an adult it is the baptized who chooses to enter into the life of faith, seeking to be a faithful disciple, growing in faith, hope and love, and using their gifts in God’s service. In this way, baptism is the beginning of the Christian life, a life that both hopes for God’s kingdom and seeks to make that kingdom a reality through faithful, Spirit-filled living.

Because a confession of faith as an adult 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 intention to continue growing in faith. Confirmation signifies a young person’s desire to enter into the full life and ministry of the congregation, and a taking upon themselves the promises made earlier by their parents.

Who May Be Baptized

Any adult person may present themselves for baptism. Upon instruction in the Christian faith, they may be baptized upon profession of faith, and become a member of Christ's church and Rye Presbyterian Church.

A parent who is a member of Rye Presbyterian may present their child for baptism. Only one parent need be an active member to request baptism for a child. The parent promises to teach the Christian faith to their child, and the congregation vows to nurture and support the child in their faith development. If the parents wish to have godparents for their child(ren), the godparents 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 themselves for baptism. Upon completion of the instruction in the confirmation class, or a satisfactory alternative, they will be baptized and then confirmed with the class.

Since baptism is the starting point of life in the Christian community of faith, it is necessary to have been baptized before becoming, or as one becomes, 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, and Orthodox traditions.

How Baptisms May Be Arranged

As the welcome into the community of faith, baptisms are celebrated at a service of public worship. The Presbyterian Church does not practice private baptisms.

Dates for baptisms are subject to the church's 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 office. The baptism application is included in this brochure, or it may be found on the church website.

When the date of the baptism has been confirmed, one of the pastors will contact you to set up a time to discuss the baptism and 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 are welcome to sit in reserved front rows in the church. The church library is available for the convenience of the family as a place to gather and get ready for the service. A deacon will assist in the service and be available to answer any questions.

We ask that no photographs be taken during the service.

ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENT

The baptismal liturgy from the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* (2018) 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 older children:

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: Do you desire that your child be baptized?

Response: We do.

Pastor: Relying on God's grace, do you promise to live the Christian faith, and to teach that faith to your child?

Response: We do.

For the godparents/sponsors (if present):

Pastor: Do you promise, through prayer and example, to support and encourage the child you stand in support of that they may grow to be a faithful Christian?

Response: I do.

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 them to know and follow Christ and to be a faithful member of his church?

Response: We do.

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.

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.