

Preface:

The Sacrament of Baptism is God's act of binding the promises of faith upon those seeking to live the Christian life and those seeking to nurture a child in the Christian life. The Sacrament of Baptism is the sign and seal of God's Grace and our response to that Grace. It is the foundational recognition of Christian commitment and is an important signpost along a lifelong journey of faith.

Baptism is a Holy Sacrament and a serious commitment involving public vows before God and the Christian family of faith. The Session strongly feels that such a commitment is not to be undertaken casually, and necessitates a thorough understanding of the meaning and responsibilities involved in Baptism. To rightly administer this Sacrament is to enter into a learning process with the individual seeking baptism, or the parents of the child to be baptized. Those seeking Baptism for themselves or their children must demonstrate an intention to participate responsibly in the life of the Church and to provide for the Christian nurture of children in the case of infant or child baptism.

Those being Baptized, or at least one of the parents of a infant or child being baptized, at Lebanon Presbyterian Church will ordinarily be active members of this or another Christian congregation, except at the discretion of the Session and the Pastor. Therefore, in keeping with the importance of Baptism in the faith of all believers, and in accordance with the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order, the Session of Lebanon Presbyterian Church approves this policy on Baptism. The Session shall review and re-authorize this policy on an annual basis.

I. GUIDELINES FOR BAPTISM:

A. Requirements of Baptism:

1. A serious commitment on the part of those seeking baptism for themselves, or for their children, to practice their faith in a living Christian community.
2. Completion of pre-baptismal counseling with the Pastor—this is a requirement of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and cannot be waived. The Pastor shall determine the number of counseling sessions.
3. No date for baptism shall be set until after completion of pre-baptismal counseling and the approval by the Pastor and the Session.
4. An age appropriate understanding of the vows and commitments involved in Baptism.
5. A commitment to respond to the vows made in Baptism with regular and responsible participation in the life of the church.
6. Examination of the candidate or parents of the child, and approval of the Session prior to the baptism. Please note that the Session meets once a month, except in the summer months, when they do not meet except for special called meetings or emergencies.

7. Scheduling of the baptism is approved by the Pastor and the Session, and is to be conducted during a regular service of worship, unless otherwise approved by the Pastor and the Session.

B. ANOINTING WITH OIL, LAYING ON OF HANDS:

1. Shall be in accordance with the Book of Order and the Directory of Worship.
2. May be done at the request of the parents and/or the Pastor.

C. REQUESTS FROM EXTENDED FAMILY:

1. Requests from extended family of the congregation are welcome, but shall be subject to the same policy and procedure as outlined above.
2. Grandparents or other relatives may not seek baptism of a child without the involvement of the parents or those exercising parental rights for the child.

D. PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOTAPING

1. As Baptism is a sacrament conducted during a service of worship, no flash photography shall be allowed.
2. Those seeking to unobtrusively record the event on film may do so only from the balcony.

II. COMMITMENTS AND VOWS (W-3.3603)

A. Those desiring the Sacrament of Baptism for their children or for themselves shall make vows that

1. Profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior,
2. Renounce evil and affirm their reliance on God's grace,
3. Declare their intention to participate actively and responsibly in the worship and mission of the church,
4. Declare their intention to provide for the Christian nurture of their child.

B. The congregation shall

1. Profess its faith, using the Apostles' Creed,
2. Voice its support of those baptized,
3. Express its willingness to take responsibility for the nurture of those baptized.

C. Vows approved by Session are as follows:

1. Vows to be taken by individuals presented by the session for baptisms (adult and infant), affirmation of faith, and reaffirmation of faith (transfer of letter):

a. Do you believe in the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules, and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love? If so, answer I do.

b. Do you profess faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and the Lord of your life? If so, answer I do.

c. Do you renounce sin and evil and do you affirm your reliance on God's grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit? If so, answer I do.

d. Do you declare your intention to participate actively and responsibly in the worship and mission of this church, through the use of your time, talents, and financial resources? If so, answer I do.

e. Will you submit to the authority of the governing body of this church, and will you seek to further the unity, purity, and peace of the church through both your actions and words? If so, answer I will.

f. (Child Baptism Only) Do you declare your intention to provide for the Christian nurture of your child, name _____ so that he/she never knows a day without the presence of God in their lives? If so, answer I do.

2. Vows to be taken by the congregation when individuals are presented by session for baptisms (adult and infant), affirmation of faith, and reaffirmation of faith (transfer of letter). These vows will normally be administered by the clerk of session:

a. Do we promise to receive name(s) _____ as a brother(s)/sister(s) in Christ, welcoming him/her/them into all aspects of our church family? If so, answer we do.

b. Do we promise to nurture him/her/them and their children in both word and deed, so that they will never know a moment without God's presence in their lives? If so, answer we do.

c. Having joined together in our affirmation of our newest Christian brothers and sisters, let us join together in affirming the Apostle's Creed!

III. COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS: In addition to the written policy, the following information shall be provided to those seeking Baptism at Lebanon Presbyterian Church.

A. What is baptism?

1. Baptism is a Sacrament, which is God's Word in action. Therefore, Baptism enacts and seals what God's Word proclaims. Baptism signifies the faithfulness of God, the washing away

of sin, rebirth in Jesus Christ, the sealing of God's Spirit, and adoption into the covenant family of the Church.

2. Baptism is the sign and seal of God's grace and covenant in Christ; it is the symbol of inclusion in God's grace and covenant with the Church.
 3. Baptism is the beginning of life in Christ and calls forth a response from the person (or parents of a child) being baptized, and the congregation.
 4. Baptism gives the church its identity and commissions the church for ministry in the world.
- B. What happens to us in baptism?

1. In baptism, we participate in Jesus' death and resurrection. We die to what separates us from God and are raised to newness of life in Christ.

2. Baptism points us back to the grace of God expressed in Jesus Christ, who died for us and who was raised for us. Baptism points us forward to that same Christ who will fulfill God's purpose in God's promised future.

3. Baptism calls us to repentance, to faithfulness, and to discipleship.

C. What is the meaning of the symbolism surrounding baptism?

1. The WATER:

- a. The water of baptism symbolizes the waters of Creation, of the Flood, and of the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the water of Baptism links us to the goodness of God's creation and to the grace of God's covenants with Noah and Israel.

- b. The prophets of Israel, amidst the failure of their own generation to honor God's covenant, called for justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. They envisioned a fresh expression of God's grace and of creation's goodness; a new covenant accompanied by the sprinkling of cleansing water.

- c. In His ministry, Jesus offered the gift of living water.

2. The TRINITARIAN FORMULA:

- a. All professing Christians shall be baptized using the Trinitarian Formula.

- b. The Trinitarian Formula is, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

- c. In accordance with the Presbyterian Church (USA) only Christians who have been baptized with the Trinitarian Formula may participate in the Lord's Supper.

D. What participation does the congregation have in baptism?

1. In the presence of those being baptized, the congregation will affirm their faith using the Apostle's Creed.

2. They will also vow to support those baptized and to express their willingness to take responsibility for the nurture of those baptized.

E. I was baptized as an infant but I don't remember it, shouldn't I be baptized again as an adult?

1. No. God's faithfulness is constant and sure, even when ours is not, Baptism is received only once. Your parents or other adult sponsors made vows on your behalf to nurture you in the life of the church.

2. However, there are many times in the life of the church when our faithfulness to our baptismal vows needs repeated renewal.

3. As we participate in the baptism of another, as we take the Lord's Supper, and as we worship together, we reaffirm the commitments made at our baptism, and we confess our ongoing need of God's grace and pledge our allegiance and obedience to God's covenant in Christ.

F. How is believer baptism different from infant baptism?

1. Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love.

2. The Baptism of those who enter the covenant upon their own profession of faith witnesses to the truth that God's gift of grace calls for fulfillment in a lived out response of faithfulness.

3. The Baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith. The parents of children take vows on behalf of the child, to provide Christian Nurture. It is the responsibility of the parents and the church to extend their faith around the child, until such time that the child can understand and accept the commitment to Christ for him/herself. At a later point in life, usually confirmation, the child will have the opportunity to publicly affirm their faith in front of the congregation.

G. What vows will I take in baptism? (You will be asked to affirm the following vows for yourself or your children.).

1. Do you profess your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

2. Do you renounce evil and affirm your reliance on God's grace?

3. Do you declare your intention to participate actively and responsibly in the worship and mission of the church?

4. Do you declare your intention to provide for the Christian nurture of your child?

H. What is my responsibility in baptism?

1. To understand the meaning and implications of Baptism as a Sacrament and the vows

you will take

2. To participate actively and responsibly in the life of the church.
3. To seek to live according to the will of God.
4. To respect and follow the policy and procedure for baptism in Lebanon Presbyterian Church
 - I. What are some commonly held misconceptions about baptism?
 1. That a person must be baptized in order to go to heaven. In The Presbyterian Church, we do not believe that God excludes un-baptized children from heaven. We believe that both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love. Children of believers are to be baptized without undue delay, but without undue haste.
 2. That once baptized, the person or child is "done" and there is no further responsibility. To be baptized in isolation of seeking to live out a Christian life is meaningless. Some people mistakenly view baptism as a sort of "good luck charm" which will protect them or their children against evil or admit them to heaven. There is nothing "magical" about baptism; it cannot substitute for a life of committed faith.
 - J. If I was baptized by another church, does it count in the Presbyterian Church (USA)?
 1. The Presbyterian Church (USA) recognizes all Baptisms with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit administered by other Christian churches.
 2. Individuals seeking to join Lebanon Presbyterian Church shall not be re-baptized.
 - K. How do I get approval for Baptism?
 1. Baptism is authorized by the Session, which is the governing body of the church. The pastor makes a recommendation to the Session regarding the Baptism, but the Session has final authority.
 2. The Pastor and the Session MUST ensure that those being baptized or the parents or those exercising parental responsibility for those being baptized, are acquainted with the significance of what God is doing in this act. The Pastor and the Session will also ensure that parents and the congregation understands their responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life.
 3. The Pastor MUST meet with the person or persons being baptized, or their parents, for pre-baptismal counseling. Except under extraordinary circumstances, to be approved by Pastor and Session, this counseling is necessary and cannot be waived. The Pastor will determine how many sessions will be needed for the baptismal counseling, and only after this is completed, will the Pastor make a recommendation to Session. The date for baptism cannot be set until the counseling has been completed.
 4. The Session meets once a month, except in the summer. Therefore, requests for baptism

must be made early enough to meet both, the requirement of counseling, and of the schedule for the next Session meeting.

L. I am a grandparent and I want my grandchild baptized in my church. What do I need to do?

1. First, the Pastor will need to talk with the parents of the child to determine their desired participation and role in the Baptism. Ordinarily, those seeking baptism for themselves or their children, shall be active members of a congregation.

2. If the parents of the child are not active members and do not desire to be active members of this or any other congregation, but will agree to allow another person to assume the responsibility for Christian nurture, then the Pastor and Session will also meet with that person to determine whether to approve the baptism.

M. If I am an active member of another Christian church, is it possible to have my child baptized here?

1. The Session may consider a request for the baptism of a child from a Christian parent who is an active member of another congregation.

2. If the Session approves such as request, it will consult with the governing body of the other congregation and shall notify them when the Sacrament has been administered.