

Holy Spirit expresses itself through the various gifts believers show in the church, e.g., teaching, preaching, and speaking in tongues (Ephesians 4).

Who can be baptized? Any adult who desires to join the Body of Jesus Christ — the church — must be baptized. According to the Presbyterian Book of Order, when a child is being presented for baptism, ordinarily the parent(s), or one(s) rightly exercising parental responsibility, shall be an active member of the congregation. Those presenting children for baptism shall promise to provide nurture and guidance within the community of faith until the child is ready to make a personal profession of faith and assume the responsibility of active church membership. (W-2.3014)

May I have a private baptism? We do not do private baptisms due to the nature of the act itself. Baptism is a sign of entering the Body of Christ, and there needs to be a congregation present to express this reality.

Should I be rebaptized if I have been baptized as an infant or baptized in another church or denomination? Any person who has been baptized in a Trinitarian church has received a Christian baptism. Therefore, we do not rebaptize persons from other churches. Nor do we rebaptize a person who was baptized as an infant. Baptism is a sign of new birth. A person needs only to be born into the Body of Christ once. A proper response for a person who is coming back to faith after a long time is a renewal ceremony, to reaffirm the vows once taken or taken by parents. Also, the Lord's Supper is available for continued nurture and forgiveness.

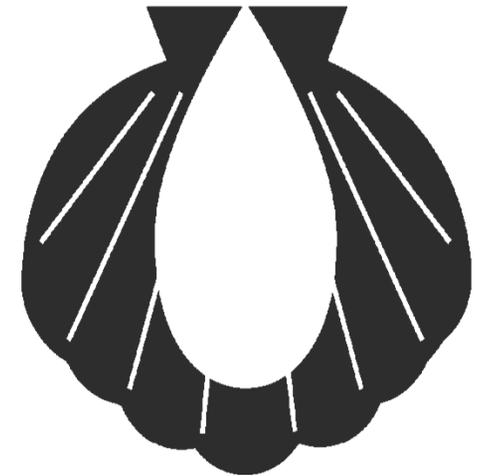
When are baptisms scheduled? Infant baptisms are scheduled for the last Sunday of each month. Adult baptisms are done in conjunction with joining the church and are done as part of the public recognition of new members when the new members class has finished its orientation.

How do I schedule a baptism? If you are a parent interested in having your child/children baptized, contact the Coordinator for Infant and Child Baptisms at 202/537-7527. If you are an adult interested in joining the church, watch for announcements for the new members classes, called *Pathway Membership Class*, that are given periodically throughout the year, or you may contact the Connections Office at 202/537-7578 for more information. The baptism will be scheduled as part of the public recognition of all new members at the conclusion of that class.



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SACRAMENT
OF



BAPTISM

Baptism

THE NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

What is baptism? Baptism is the sign and seal of being born into the Body of Jesus Christ. As a sign, it points to something else beyond the water — new life from God. As a seal, it is the sacrament commanded by our Lord Jesus and confirmed by his disciples. Baptism involves God’s act and our response. God is reaching out to us, and we are responding to God’s grace. Jesus in his own baptism identified with us, and we now, by his command, identify with him in his death and resurrection.

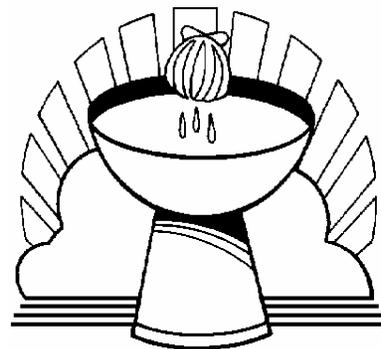
Why are infants baptized? Why not just adults? Infants are baptized in continuity with God’s covenant relationship to his people, beginning with Abraham. God gave Abraham and his children the sign of circumcision to indicate their relationship with the saving God. In the New Testament, the sign of God’s relationship is baptism, which both affirms the Old Testament covenant sign by including all in the family, and also alters the relationship with the new sign of water. The New Testament reports predominantly adult baptisms, but does indicate that families also received the sacrament, e.g., the Philippian jailer and family in Acts 16. In Peter’s Pentecost sermon, he indicated that the new covenant “is for you and your children.”

Where and when are people baptized? The church baptizes people in a worship service accompanied by the preaching of God’s Word from the Bible. The sacrament of baptism needs the preaching of God’s Word to make its purpose clear. It also needs the people of God present to indicate that those baptized are coming into the Body of Christ — the congregation. Thus, we do not offer private baptisms.

What if I’ve been away from the church a long time and want to renew my baptism? Whenever we baptize an individual, we give all baptized believers a chance to renew their vows by joining in the litany for baptism. By repeating the vows, we remind ourselves that we bear the mark of God’s covenant upon our lives.

What are my and the church’s responsibilities in baptism? Baptism is a sign of birth into the Body of Christ. Any child coming into the world needs to grow and mature. The same is true for those baptized. They should find nurture for themselves so that they can fulfill their baptismal intention, to grow into the image of Jesus Christ. Parents pledge to raise their baptized children to mature faith in Jesus Christ. The church body further pledges to support the nurture and growth of both children and adults.

How are we baptized? What happens and how much water is necessary? An ordained minister of the church places water on the head of an individual and pronounces the Trinitarian name of God, “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The amount of water is not a matter of controversy for Presbyterians, since the water is a sign of something spiritual happening in the life of the believer. The custom in our church is to sprinkle water on those being baptized.



Is my child in spiritual danger before being baptized? Your child is not in danger before being baptized. God is the sovereign Creator who brought your child into the world. God also sent his son Jesus to die for you and your child. Thus, God loves your child and would not send him or her to hell before growing old enough to be accountable for sin. Presbyterians point to the real presence of God in the sacrament, but have stopped short of tying the sovereign God to human actions even if the actions are those the church views as sacraments. Thus, we baptize without haste or without delay, knowing that God gives us grace before and beyond our actions.

What’s the difference between dedication and baptism? Some parents prefer to wait until their children reach the age of accountability before they are baptized. In this case, some parents still want to indicate that their children are in God’s hands by standing in front of the congregation. There is no biblically warranted ceremony for this sort of dedication. God already has created children, loves them, and has sent his Son Jesus to die for them. It is the church’s wisdom that parents should either have their children baptized or wait for adult baptism and avoid a dedication ceremony for which we have no service.

Does the Presbyterian Church use godparents? The Presbyterian Church views the gathered congregation as having responsibility for the child or adult baptized. We indicate this responsibility by asking the congregation to pledge support for the parents and the child. Thus, when parents stand for baptism, we ask that only the immediate family is present. Friends and other relatives may sit with the congregation.

Is water baptism the same thing as baptism of the Holy Spirit? Some traditions separate water baptism from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A broader reading of the Bible indicates that these two are the same phenomenon. When a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, it is because of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the