

YOUR CHILD'S

BAPTISM



LIBERTY CORNER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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*Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them!
For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."
~ Matthew 19:14 NLT*

*He (Jesus) called a little child to him and placed the child among them.
And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children,
you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of
this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes
one such child in my name welcomes me.
~Matthew 18: 2-5*

INTRODUCTION



Welcome to a special time in your family's life—your child's baptism! Through baptism, your child will be welcomed into God's family at Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church.

This booklet is intended to help you understand the joyful commitment that both you and the congregation enter with baptism, and to answer questions you may have.

Part of the process is to speak with a pastor. We want you to understand and be comfortable with what will take place during the baptism, and your role as a Christian parent.

Also, we ask to you to complete the Baptism Covenant form, which includes all the information we need for both scheduling and historical records. Your request will be acted upon by the Session of Elders, and you will be informed when your request has been approved.

May God bless you and your family.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT BAPTISM



What is baptism?

“...The Sacrament of Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, a mark of entrance into the visible church. In the baptism of infants, we confess our confidence in God’s gracious initiative, that a baby who cannot turn to God is nonetheless, claimed as a member of the covenant community, a child of God, cleansed by grace and sealed by the Spirit.” ~ *ECO Essential Tenets*

What is a sacrament?

A Sacrament is a “sacred moment” where we experience God’s power and presence in a visible way. As a church in the Reformed tradition, we observe two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (also called Holy Communion). Jesus himself led both of these and commanded his followers to do the same.

Baptism is a sign of God’s grace, which means God’s loving favor even when we do not deserve it. God loves us, not for any good we have done, but because God is love (1 John 4:8). Even though we are sinners who have rebelled against God, the Father loves us, Jesus died for our forgiveness, and the Spirit invites us into God’s family. Baptism represents that grace-filled adoption as God’s children.

What does the Bible tell us about baptism?

In baptism, we are claimed as God’s beloved children. We see this in the baptism of Jesus:

¹⁶After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” - Matthew 3:16-17

In our baptism, God claims us as his dearly loved children too, who bring God great joy!

Jesus commanded baptism.

¹⁸Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” - Matthew 28: 16-20

Baptism connects us with the crucified and risen Christ.

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. – Romans 6:4

What happens during a baptism?

When you meet with a pastor to plan your child's baptism, the pastor will review with you what will take place during the baptism in worship. The pastor will briefly explain the meaning of baptism, and then invite parents and the congregation to take vows before God. These vows include:

- Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
- Will you renounce the ways of sin, and strive to make Jesus Lord of every area of your life?
- Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?

In the case of child baptism, parents/guardians are asked:

- Relying on God's grace, will you raise your child in the way of Jesus Christ?

The congregation will be asked:

- Do we, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ at Liberty Corner, promise to guide and nurture [name] by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging [him/her] to know and follow Jesus and to be faithful members of Christ's church? If so, answer "We do."

Usually, the elements of the baptism will include an opening statement, relevant scriptures, and questions to the parents, and the congregation. The parents reaffirm their faith in Jesus Christ, and the water is placed on the child, and a prayer of blessing is said. Then the child is presented to the congregation and the congregation responds with joyful thanksgiving.

Can godparents or family members participate?

Yes! You are welcome, but not required or expected, to invite family members or close friends to stand with you during the ceremony. There is no separate vow for godparents; they will promise to guide and nurture the one being baptized along with the congregation.

What if my child has very special needs?

We are glad to make accommodations for children with special needs. In the case of a person with special needs that would prevent them from participating in worship, we can hold a baptism service with a few elders representing the church.

What is the significance of the water used in baptism?

Although the water used in baptism is ordinary water, it has symbolic meaning for us as Christians. The water recalls the waters of the Creation story (Genesis 1: 1-4), the Great Flood (Genesis 6:5-9:17), and the miraculous water that flowed from the rock during the Exodus

(Exodus 17: 1-7). Jesus spoke of himself as the living water and urged the Samaritan woman at the well to receive the water of everlasting life (John 4:4-15).

Do I need to be a covenant partner (member) of Liberty Corner to have my child baptized?

Baptism is a sacrament of adoption into God's family, the Church. The congregation takes a vow to pray for and nurture this child's faith. We want to ensure that we can take that vow seriously. For that reason, *ordinarily at least one parent must be a covenant partner (member) of this church*. This is not to exclude people from baptism, but rather to invite people to be part of the church's mission to point the world to eternal and abundant life in Jesus Christ.

To become a covenant partner, you can take the 1stStep class when it is offered, and then request baptism for your child.

If your spouse is not a covenant partner, they are welcome to stand with you when your child is baptized, and they are encouraged to come to the meeting with the pastor, so that you can understand together the meaning of the sacrament.

Can I wait until my child can decide on their own to be baptized?

This is an option. Some families and Christian denominations prefer "believer's baptism," where the person being baptized is old enough to profess faith in Christ on their own. In this case, a family may have a dedication (without water) for infants and young children.

In the Reformed tradition, we understand that God reaches out to us in grace, even when we are too young to understand. God saves us by grace; we do not save ourselves by our choices. The New Testament gives us examples (Acts 16:15; Acts 16:33) of entire families and households being baptized, which would have included children. As Peter declared on Pentecost, "The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:39).

At Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church, parents and the congregation make promises before God in every baptism that they will commit to raising the child in the Christian faith, so that the child will be able to confirm those promises in their own confirmation.

Can my child go to Heaven without baptism?

The Reformed tradition teaches us that the sacrament of baptism is a symbol and seal of salvation, *not* that the sacrament "magically" bestows it. We are saved by God's grace through Christ's sacrifice, not by any religious ceremony.



KEEPING YOUR PROMISE

At your child's baptism, you promise that you will rely upon God's grace and set an example for your child of the new life in Jesus Christ. We are committed to helping you to keep the promises that you made in your child's baptism. The congregation promises to partner with you in this effort, but you are the primary nurturer of your child's faith. This may sound daunting but be assured that this congregation is supportive of you and offers you resources to develop your own faith, as well as your child's faith.

We believe that we are spiritual beings in physical bodies and that God calls us to himself. Each of us matters to God and Jesus assures us that even the hairs on our heads are numbered (Luke 12:7). We can teach our children many important things, both by our words and our example. The most important and enduring thing we can teach them is to have a relationship with the God of Jesus Christ.

You are strongly encouraged to commit your family to being active participants in the life of our church. Your faithful attendance in worship and your child's regular attendance in Liberty Corner Kids will build a solid foundation for a stronger life together.

CONTACTS



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