

The Sacrament of Baptism

The God who gave signs and seals of His promises in Old Testament days continued to give signs through Jesus to His people in the New Testament.

You will find not the word “**Sacrament**” in the Bible. While it is not a Bible word, it is nevertheless a helpful word. It comes from the Latin word “**Sacramentum**” meaning “Oath” or “Promise”. The Roman soldier swore a sacramentum or oath of allegiance to Caesar. A sacrament is a visual aid which we can experience with our senses of sight, touch and taste, reminding us of the promises which *God* makes to us. The Presbyterian Church, as a Reformed Church, celebrates two sacraments, which Jesus himself instituted. These are the **Sacrament of Baptism** and the **Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper**. There is nothing magical about Sacraments. They have no value in and of themselves. They are simply signs which point to the promise of grace, and the water remains water and doesn’t wash sins away.

Presbyterians believe that people who are not Christians ought **not** to be baptised until they become Christians, that is, until they “profess their faith in Christ and in obedience to Him”.

Those who profess faith in Christ ought not to neglect Baptism for themselves or for their children – who are included in God’s promise of a relationship with Him through faith in Jesus.

Since **the children of believers** are, through God’s covenant and promise, called to be part of the visible Church, they are entitled to baptism and to nurture by the Church and pastoral care. To the end that:

- (i) Baptism shall be administered to those who make a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the infant children of one or both believing parents. It shall be administered in all cases by a minister and, as far as possible, it shall be administered publicly.
- (ii) Sacramental discipline is the responsibility of the **Kirk Session**; so it is desirable (though not necessary, except in difficult cases) that the Session should be informed that a baptism is to take place and that the elder for the district should visit the home. Refusal also is the prerogative of the Session.
- (iii) The Kirk Session shall keep a record of all baptised persons in the congregation not yet in full communion; and shall in due time seek to lead them to full confession of their faith by their partaking of the Lord’ Supper”. * Extract from the Code of the Church

Parents presenting their children for baptism you will be required to do two things:

Firstly, to profess your faith in God as your Creator and Father, in Jesus Christ as the only one who has dealt with your sin personally, and in the Holy Spirit as the one who works in your life to make you more Christ like in everything you think and do in your life.

Secondly, you promise God that with His help, you will do all you can to give every evidence of godliness to your children in your home. That you will raise them in a God honouring way and bring them consistently to Church where they will be involved in worship and be nurtured by the teaching of the Church, so that in their years of understanding they will commit their lives to Jesus.

It would be expected, therefore, that such parents would be Full (communicant) members of the Church.

The two questions asked to parents at a Service are:

1. In presenting your child for Baptism, do you profess your faith in God as your creator and Father in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour and in the Holy Spirit as your Sanctifier and Guide?
2. Do you promise that by God's help, you will provide a Christian home and bring up your child in the worship and teaching of the Church so that your child may come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord?

For further information regarding the Sacrament of Baptism, please contact Rev P McConnell.