

What **questions** are asked?

At the baptism, the minister will ask the parents and the congregation the following questions:

The Parents:

Q: Who is your Lord and Saviour?

A: Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour.

(The rest of these questions are answered "I do")

Q: Do you trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for your salvation?

Q: Do you promise to obey him.

Q: Our Lord Jesus has commanded us to teach those whom we baptise in His name. Do you promise to teach N..... from the Scriptures how to trust in Christ as *his* Saviour and to follow him as Lord?

Q: Do you promise to pray for N....., and to set *him* a godly example in your actions, that, by God's grace, *he* may be a faithful follower of our Lord Jesus Christ all *his* days?

Q: As part of your godly example, do you promise to be regular and diligent in meeting with God's people on the Lord's Day?

The Congregation:

Do you, the members of this congregation, promise to receive this child into your midst with Christian love and consideration, to pray for her, to care for her, and to provide a Christian education and godly example? If you accept this responsibility, please say: I will.

What about a **Thanksgiving Service?**

Many Christians believe that only those who can give a credible confession of faith in Jesus should be baptised - believer's baptism.

If this is your position, or if you recognise that since you're not a Christian, baptism of your baby isn't for you, then another alternative may be a **Thanksgiving Service**. This allows you the opportunity to thank God publicly for your baby, and to offer them into his care.

I'd be happy to discuss this option with you, or any other questions you might have.

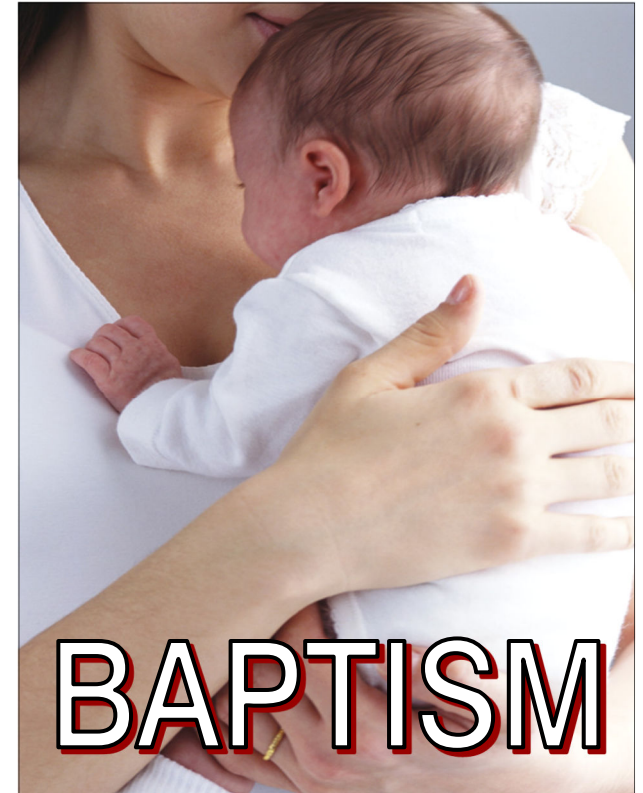


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Your enquiry concerning the baptism of your child shows that you want the best for this new life that God has entrusted to you. That's fantastic! This information seeks to explain what baptism is all about.

Baptism:

What is **baptism**?

Baptism is a public act of washing with water. In the Presbyterian church, this normally involves **sprinkling** or **pouring**, although immersion is also fine. It occurs as part of a normal Sunday church service.

The washing with water is a sign of what God has done in a person's life - cleansing from sin, and the beginning of a new life. It is an **outward** sign of what God does **inwardly** in those who put their trust in Jesus. Baptism is a sign that the person now belongs to God - they are a member of God's family.

There is nothing we can do to clean ourselves - to make us acceptable before God. It can only be on the basis of God's pardon of us. He declares us innocent of our rebellion against him, and he counts Jesus' death as an acceptable punishment on our behalf.

What baptism **isn't**:

It's perhaps also helpful to outline what baptism **isn't**.

- It **isn't** a naming ceremony in the way that the word "christening" is often used.
- It **isn't** the way a child is registered with the church as you would register a child birth with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.
- It **isn't** a guarantee of getting into heaven.
- It **doesn't** make a person a Christian.
- It **isn't** for everyone.



So **why** baptise?

We need to look at what **the Bible** says. From the beginning, the Bible describes **the family** as being very important in God's plan. The blessings which came to a family from knowing and obeying God were shared by the whole family - parents and children alike.



In the Old Testament, God gave a sign to his people to show that they belonged to his family, and that he would continue to do good to them. This sign was **circumcision**, and you can read about it in Genesis Chapter 17, verses 1 to 14. This sign showed God's commitment to His people, and their commitment to Him.

In the New Testament, Jesus gives a **new** sign to show that a person belongs to God's family. It involved a symbolic washing with water, and was called **baptism**. These two signs (circumcision and baptism), therefore, point to the same thing - a relationship with God.

Who is to be baptised?

The New Testament refers to two groups of people being baptised.

1. Those who became Christians as adults (see for instance Acts 2:41)
2. The families of those who became Christians - parents and children (see Acts 16:13-34)

Peter, one of Jesus' apostles, declares that since the **promise** of God's acceptance is for adults and for their children, then the **sign** of baptism is also for parents and their children.

(Acts 2:38-39 NIV) "Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

For this reason the Presbyterian Church baptises two groups of people.

1. The children of Christian parents, because as such, they belong to the people of God.
2. Adults who become Christians

Why does the Presbyterian Church **baptise children**?



Our denomination baptises infants because it believes it to be obedient to the overall theology of the Bible. At the heart of this practice is the idea of **God's covenant** with his people. It is this covenant, or promise, which both **circumcision** in the Old Testament and **baptism** in the New Testament point to.

One characteristic of the Old Testament covenant was **its inclusion of the children**. Children were to be instructed in the obligations and benefits of the arrangement. The male children were to receive the sign of circumcision when they were only eight days old (Genesis 17:10 ff)

Although there are some differences between the covenant of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament, they are one at their heart - both signifying God's intention to make the receiver part of his family.

The coming of Jesus did not suddenly exclude children from participation in God's covenant. They continue to be part of God's people (1 Cor 7:14). Christian parents have every reason to believe that God has included their children in God's family, and baptism is a sign of that.

For this reason the Presbyterian Church has continued what it believes to be the biblical practice of treating children of believers as beneficiaries of the covenant. Therefore, children are baptised.

