

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS
CONCERNING

INFANT BAPTISM

IN

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Sarasota, Florida



Information Concerning INFANT AND CHILDREN BAPTISM

From the time of the apostles, the Christian Church has baptized infants and children. The early Church continued the Jewish tradition in the Old Testament of including children into the household of God. In the Jewish tradition, the sign of inclusion was made by circumcision. In the Christian tradition, male and female children were included and the sign was changed from circumcision to baptism. (Gen. 17:7-14, Lev. 12-3, I Cor. 12:13, Acts 16”33, I Cor. 1:16, etc.)

DO INFANTS AND CHILDREN NEED TO BE BAPTIZED?

No, Jesus Christ died on the cross for our salvation. Baptism does not ensure salvation for an infant or adult. We do not practice the baptism of infants out of fear for the condition of the soul of an unbaptized child.

WHY BAPTIZE BABIES AND CHILDREN?

God is not only our heavenly Father, but the Father of our children as well. “For the promise is to you and to your children...” (Acts 2:3) Jesus said, “Allow the children to come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:16)

It is the church’s desire to ensure that every child born to Christian parents never knows a time where he/she is not surrounded by the love of God and included fully in the life of Christ’s church.

THE FAMILY NATURE OF BAPTISM

The church is God’s family, which includes all God’s children, infant and adult. Baptism is the sign of entrance into the church and is an act of the entire church congregation, parents, and pastor.

Because Baptism is a sacrament, that is, a sacred rite of the church, each application for Baptism must be approved by the elders of the church who make up the Session or governing body of the church. It is necessary that the parents or those exercising parental responsibility be members of the congregation or members in good standing of another Christian congregation of believers. Members of other congregations who wish to have a child baptized at FPC should secure the approval of the pastor or governing body of their own church. At baptism the entire congregation assumes the role of “godparents.” The congregation promises to tell each child the good news of the gospel, to help each child to know all that Christ commands and, by their fellowship, and to strengthen each child’s family ties with the household of God.

THE DAY OF BAPTISM

Be prepared to give answers to the questions listed in this booklet when you are asked. Since the congregation serves as “godparents,” we do not have individuals perform this function. Nevertheless, sponsors may be present. Your sponsors must be approved by the Session and must be

worshipping members of a Christian congregation. This role should not be confused with your child's legal guardians. A sponsor is someone whose life in faith is exemplary and who takes special spiritual responsibility for your child throughout her/his life.

If the baby cries, do not become embarrassed. It is often par for the course. If you will relax, your child will sense your ease and will respond accordingly.

Please arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of the worship service. Sit in the front of the sanctuary.

Baptism is a sacrament and part of the service of worship. No pictures are to be taken. Please advise your family and friends of this policy.

If you desire pictures, the pastor will be happy to arrange this following the worship hour. If you choose to make a video or your child's baptism, the videographer must remain seated (anywhere) in a stationary position throughout the Baptism service.

WHAT DO PARENT'S PROMISE?

When you present your child for baptism, you publicly announce that you believe in Jesus Christ and show that you want your child to study him, know him, love him, and serve him as his chosen disciple.

You are asked specific questions at the time of your child's baptism:

Do you desire that your child/children be baptized?

Do you? **We do.**

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, Do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

Do you? **We do.**

Do you confess Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior and do you trust in him?

Do you? **We do.**

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love?

Will you? **We will.**

Relying on God's grace, do you promise to live the Christian faith and teach that faith to your child/children?

Do you? **We do.**

The congregation will promise:

Our Lord Jesus Christ ordered us to teach those who are baptized. Do you, the people of the church, promise to tell (child's name) the good news of the gospel, to help him/her know all that Christ commands, by word and deed, with love and prayer encourage him/her to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of this church?

Your sponsor(s) will be asked:

Do you promise, through prayer and example, to support and encourage (child's name) to be a faithful Christian?

The congregation takes its vow very seriously by supplying an entire educational program for children.

Your vows in practical application mean that you will make every effort to have your child attend worship and church school classes which begin at age 2 and continue through the high school years.

You promise, also, that you will set a good Christian example for your child by joining with your child in worship at church and in the home.

WHEN AND WHERE ARE INFANTS AND CHILDREN BAPTIZED?

Baptisms are approved by the Session at their regular meeting each month; therefore, requests for baptism must be made to the Session the month prior to the month of baptism.

After the Session has met and approved your application, a minister will meet with you to answer any questions you may have and to go over in details of what will happen on the day of your child's baptism.

Baptism are conducted during the Sunday morning service of worship. Please be flexible in choosing a date. The pastors will work with you to avoid conflicts with other scheduled worship events.

AFTER THE BAPTISM—WHAT THEN?

At baptism God declares, "This is my child!" We express our thanks to God, acknowledge our obligation and privileges in rearing our child in a Christian home, and dedicate our child to God's care.

Your child will be baptized into the membership of Christ's Church. Later, during the teenage years, he/she will be given the opportunity to confirm the vows that you took on his/her behalf at baptism. At Confirmation a young person is welcomed into full (active) membership in the church.

Sincere parents will teach their growing children to pray, by praying with them and for them. They will take them to worship and to church school and maintain their own covenant with God and the Church, and fulfill their promise to teach their children in the ways of our Lord.