

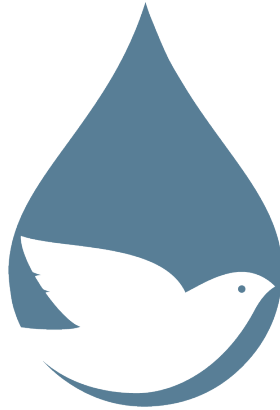
YOUR CHILD'S

# 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! We are thankful that you are requesting the sacrament of baptism for your child. Through baptism, your child will be welcomed into God's family at Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church.

In order to help you understand the joyful commitment that you and this congregation are making in your child's baptism, we have created this booklet. We hope that it will answer questions you may have in order that your child's baptism will be as meaningful as possible. Please do not hesitate to bring to your pastor any other questions or concerns that you may have.

You are asked to complete the Baptism Covenant form, included with this booklet, in order to request baptism. The request will be acted upon by the Session, which meets bi-monthly. It is suggested that you provide two or three alternative dates for the baptism, as well as the service you would prefer. You will be informed as to when your request has been approved.

You are required to meet with the pastor or attend a baptism class. We want you to understand and be comfortable with what will take place during the baptism, and your role as a Christian parent.

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*

## Why is baptism a sacrament?

Baptism is one of two sacraments in our church (the other being Holy Communion). As a church in the Reformed tradition, we have two sacraments instituted by Christ through his own baptism and through his own words at the Last Supper.

A sacrament is a sign and symbol of God’s merciful love. Like circumcision, which was a sign of God’s covenant with Israel, baptism is a sign of God’s covenant with the Church. It is a means of grace (undeserved favor). God gives grace freely in the sacrament. We cannot do anything to earn it.

## Do I need to be a member of the church to have my child baptized?

Yes, by becoming a member (we call it being a “covenant partner”), you are making a commitment to your own spiritual growth and also helping the congregation to keep the promise that they will make to you in the baptism service to support you and your child in your faith journeys.

## What does the Bible tell us about baptism?

### Jesus’ baptism: Matthew 3: 1-2, 13-17

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup>But John tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?”

<sup>15</sup>But Jesus said, “It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.” So John agreed to baptize him.

<sup>16</sup>After 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. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

### The Great Commission: Matthew 28: 16-20

<sup>18</sup>Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Teach 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."

### The Promises of Baptism: Acts 2:38-39

<sup>38</sup>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. <sup>39</sup>The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

### Baptism connects us with the crucified and risen Christ: Romans 6:4

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.

## **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. 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 then the actual baptism takes place. Then the child is presented to the congregation and the congregation responds with joyful thanksgiving.

## **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).

## **What types of baptism can take place at this church?**

In the Reformed tradition, which Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church is part of, baptism can be done by sprinkling a little water on the child's head, or by immersion (the full body is covered with water in the baptistry). Usually, baptisms by immersion are held only when there is a group to be baptized because of the effort involved to set up the baptistry.

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

This is an option, and there are other Christian denominations that have “believer’s baptism,” meaning that the person being baptized is old enough to understand the commitment they are making and are able to profess faith in Christ on their own. Many of those churches will offer families the opportunity of having a dedication service for infants and young children.

In the Reformed tradition, we understand that God reaches out to us in grace, even if we are too young to understand. The emphasis is on God’s grace, rather than on our initiative. Baptism is a sign of God’s covenant with his people that includes all generations. The New Testament gives us examples (Acts 16: 15; Acts 16:33) of entire families and households being baptized, which would have included children and slaves.

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.

## **If my child is not baptized, can he still go to heaven?**

Baptism is a visible sign of God’s invisible grace, not an entry pass into heaven. Baptism is meaningful, not magical. While some Christian traditions hold that baptism is necessary for salvation that is simply not found in the Bible. John 3:16-17 declares, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” We also hold that an individual only needs to be baptized once (Ephesians 4:4-6).

## **Can we baptize our baby with just our family in our home, or at the church?**

In the Reformed tradition, baptism is regarded as an act of the congregation. This is why your request to have your child baptized is brought to the session (the governing body of the church) for approval and the congregation participates in the baptism by promising to help nurture your child in the faith.

In a sense, the congregation is the corporate sponsor of your child. You are not expected to find godparents, but you are welcome to have family members or close friends stand with you during the baptism.

## **What is the role of my spouse who is not a member of the church in our child’s baptism?**

If your spouse is supportive of the baptism and wishes to stand with you when your child is baptized, they are welcome to do so. As a covenant partner of this church, you will be the one making the promises at the baptism. They are also encouraged to come to the meeting with pastor or the baptism class, so that you can understand together the meaning of the sacrament.



## 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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