

The Sacrament of Baptism (Infants)

Book of Worship §3-2G

Since baptism is the act by which a person is solemnly admitted into the visible church, the regular administration of the sacraments is ordinarily done in the presence of the family of believers. Ideally this sacrament is administered after the preaching of the Word. At the appropriate time, the pastor invites the parents of the children being presented for baptism to come forward and stand facing him before the congregation near the font in which the element for the sacrament, the water, has already been placed. The pastor may then use words such as the following:

Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, representing Christ and all his benefits. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ. By the act of baptism, a person becomes a part of the visible church, for it is a sign and a seal of the covenant of grace for believers and their children. As a sign, it proclaims God's forgiveness and our redemption in Jesus Christ. As a seal, God marks us as adopted children of our heavenly Father. It indicates our engrafting into Christ, our rebirth, the remission of sins, and our ability by the power of the Spirit to walk in newness of life. It is the duty of those who present their children for baptism to answer the following questions:

1. Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?
2. Do you claim God's covenant promises and benefits for your child and by faith do you look to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your child as you do your own?
3. Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and do you promise, by relying on God's power and grace through the Holy Spirit, to live an exemplary life before your child?
4. Do you commit yourself to pray with and for your child, to teach your child the Scriptures and the great articles of our faith in Jesus Christ?
5. Do you promise to use every means provided by God, including faithful participation in the life of the church, to bring up your child in the loving discipline of the Lord?

Once the parents have answered affirmatively, the pastor may continue by using words such as:

May the Lord bless you and your child, and faithfully help you to keep these promises.

This sacrament also lays solemn obligations upon you, the people of God.

1. Do you, the members of this congregation, acting for yourselves and in behalf of the whole Body of Christ, assume responsibility with these parents for the spiritual nurture of this child?
2. Do you commit yourself to set a godly example before this child, to provide, as far as you are able, all that is necessary to the end that this child may one day confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

The pastor may then offer prayer to God thanking him for his grace and mercy and asking the Holy Spirit to bless the water and all those who are participating in the sacrament. The pastor may then baptize the child using words such as the following:

_____ [name], child of the Covenant, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Upon completion, a prayer may be offered in which God's blessings are asked upon the child, upon all the children of the congregation, and for faithfulness to the vows that people have taken.