

Faith Presbyterian Church

## **Baptism & The Lord's Supper**

### *Questions and Answers for Parents and Others*

The Presbyterian Church recognizes two sacraments in the life of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper (or communion). These sacraments are integral to our faith because they remind us, in very tangible ways, of God's power, presence and grace in our lives through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Parents, in particular, often have questions about what these sacraments mean for their children. Hopefully the following answers will help. Please know that any of our pastors, elders or deacons would be happy to talk with you further if you have more questions.

## **BAPTISM**

### **Who may be baptized here at Faith?**

We baptize both adults and children. Adults who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who make a heartfelt commitment to giving their lives to him as fully devoted followers are invited to be baptized. Baptized adults who have young children are also invited to have their children baptized. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are even able to respond in faith. When children are baptized, parents make a public promise to do everything in their power to raise their children, with the help of God, to come to one day love and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. At the time of the baptism, the congregation makes a promise to help parents towards this end. We are in this together!

### **For a child to be baptized, must one or both parents be members of the church?**

No. All baptisms, however, must be approved by the elders of the church in consultation with the pastor(s). Even though parents do not need to be members, there is, however, an expectation that those parents (or parent) must be actively involved in the life of the church. The promises parents make in baptism include a promise to raise children in the community of the church. Furthermore, the congregation makes the promise to be actively involved in the spiritual development of that child. For these things to happen, the family must be an active part of this community.

### **What age is most appropriate for baptism?**

There is no "right age" for baptism. Parents, however, are encouraged to present their children for baptism without undue haste and without undue delay. While we do not rush parents to baptize their children, we also encourage parents to baptize their kids not too long after they are born. Any of our pastors can help parents walk through this decision.

### **Do I have to baptize my children or can I allow them to wait until they are older?**

Of course, we do not require parents to baptize their children. We only encourage them to do so.

### **When do baptisms take place? Can we do a private baptism?**

Baptisms of both adults and children always take place in the context of worship with the congregation. It is, therefore, not our practice to do private baptisms. This sacrament, particularly in the case of children, has so much to do with a community making a commitment to the spiritual growth of an individual that it does not make sense to baptize apart from the community. In the baptism service the congregation promises to tell this child the good news of the gospel, to help him/her know all that Christ commands, and by their fellowship, to strengthen the child's family ties with the household of God. Presbyterians understand that while the Christian faith is always personal, it is never private. Faith is always nurtured and lived out in the context of a believing community.



### **If I was baptized in tradition other than Presbyterian, does that matter?**

All Christian baptisms, done in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are recognized by the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterians, then, do not “re-baptize.”

### **How do I arrange for my child to be baptized?**

First, speak to one of the pastors. If there is a particular pastor you would like to baptize your child(ren), speak to him or her. After talking through baptism with you and answering any questions you or your children may have, the pastor will bring your request to the elders (Session) for approval. It is helpful if baptism are scheduled at least two months in advance to provide time to make adequate arrangements. Also, please note that we have two “Baptism Sundays” per year, one in January and one in May. These are occasions where we particularly encourage people who want to be baptized to do so.

### **Does Faith do baby “dedication”?**

No. However, when infants are born in our community, we invite parents, at their earliest opportunity to allow us a few minutes in worship to introduce their son/daughter to the congregation and offer a prayer of blessing and thanks for new life.

# THE LORD'S SUPPER

## **What does the sacrament of the Lord's Supper mean?**

On the day of his resurrection, the risen Christ made himself known to his followers in the breaking of the bread (See, for instance, Luke 24:30-31). In a similar way, Christ makes himself known to us today in the breaking of the bread and in the sharing of the cup. Though it is mysterious, we believe that we experience the presence, grace and power of Jesus Christ in a special way when we share in this sacrament together. Among other things, in this sacrament, we are reminded that in spite of our sin, we are covered with the grace of God because of the broken body and spilled blood of Christ on the cross. When we eat the bread and drink the wine, God's covenant of grace with us through Christ's sacrifice is, once again, reaffirmed.

## **Who may receive the Lord's Supper in the Presbyterian Church?**

Any baptized child or adult of any Christian church is invited to take part in the Lord's Supper. Those who want to participate in the Lord's Supper, but have not been baptized, should speak with one of our pastors about being baptized.

## **At what age should children partake in the Lord's Supper?**

There is no "right age" to begin receiving the Lord's Supper. Once again, children must first be baptized. Also, we ask parents to work hard to discern when a child begins to express an interest in receiving the sacrament and has demonstrated some ability to do so with an appropriate level of seriousness. Once that happens, parents should take some time to carefully explain to the child, in terms he/she can understand, the meaning of the sacrament. For younger children, it is helpful to continue to remind them of these things each time the sacrament is celebrated, answering their questions along the way. Pastors, by the way, can be helpful along these lines.

## **Are there other names for this sacrament?**

Yes, and each one expresses something different. *Communion* emphasizes what we have in common. In the sacrament we are together not only in our shared faith but also in our common need for Christ's grace and truth in our daily lives. The term *Lord's Supper* reminds us that we share this meal in the memory and Spirit of the risen Christ who so often shared table fellowship with his followers and many others, rich and poor, sinners of all kinds. The name *Eucharist* is an expression which means "good grace." It helps us remember that the sacrament is a precious gift which God has given to his people. As this term is used widely in all sorts of Christian traditions, we are reminded that the sacrament is a celebration which joins together a great diversity of Christians around the world.

### **How frequently is communion celebrated at Faith?**

It is our current practice to celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of every month at both services, weekly on Wednesday evening during the seasons of Advent (four weeks before Christmas) and Lent (six weeks before Easter), and at other special occasions. If we chose to do so, we could celebrate this sacrament every week. Many congregations choose to do exactly that.

### **Is there any difference between communion that is passed in the pews and communion which we go forward to receive?**

No. One method is not better than the other. Here at Faith, it is typically our practice to go forward to receive the Lord's Supper. This method is called intinction. Other congregations have other practices which equally express the full meaning of the sacrament. We do, however, always make a point of bringing the bread and cup to those in the pews who are unable, for whatever reason, to come forward.

