

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

As an act of the whole church, Baptism is celebrated (except for extraordinary circumstances) in the context of corporate worship. Baptism is a sign and act of God's self-giving, by which God's grace is made available to us.

The meaning of Baptism is many-faceted. In Baptism, God claims us and marks us as God's own. Baptism signifies our engrafting into Christ, and so affirms our new identity as members of the body of Christ. Through the waters of Baptism, we participate in Christ's death and resurrection by which we die to all that separates us from God and are raised to new life in Christ.

The basic order of Baptism is as follows:

Presentation. Persons to be baptized are brought to the font and presented for baptism. The meaning of Baptism is declared in the words of Scripture. Older children, youth, and adults express their desire to be baptized. Parents promise to fulfill the responsibilities for Christian nurture. The congregation also promises to love and nurture those being baptized and to assist them to be faithful disciples.

Profession of Faith. Those coming to be baptized and parents of infants or young children make vows, renouncing the ways of evil and affirming the way of Christ. The congregation joins the candidates for Baptism (or their parents) in affirming the historic faith of the church using the baptismal creed, the Apostles' Creed.

Thanksgiving Over the Water. God's saving acts are remembered with thanksgiving and the Holy Spirit is invoked, that those baptized might be freed from the power of sin, born to new life, and incorporated into the body of Christ.

The Baptism. In the name of the triune God, the minister pours or sprinkles water visibly and generously on the head of each candidate.

Laying on of Hands. As a sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, the minister lays hands upon the head of the newly baptized, praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome. The newly baptized are welcomed into the household of God, and are charged to be faithful disciples.

The Peace. The congregation may welcome the newly baptized into the household of God, sharing signs of peace.

Information on Baptism and the Lord's Supper is drawn from Book of Common Worship, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.