

Baptism Step by Step at St. John's Reformed Church

Inform the pastor of your interest in having yourself and/or your child baptized.

Become a regular attendee and participant in the life of St. John's Reformed Church. **In order to have your child baptized at least one parent must be a confessing member at St. John's Reformed Church.**

Read carefully and prayerfully all of the information given to you regarding baptism. If you have questions contact the pastor or an elder of St. John's Reformed Church.

Consider prayerfully the vows you will be taking.

A meeting with the pastor will be scheduled to discuss baptism, and answer any questions you might have.

A date and time will be set to meet with the elders who have the authority to extend the sacrament of baptism to you and/or your child.

A date will be set for your baptism at a regularly scheduled time of worship. Baptism generally marks the beginning of your and/or your child's life as a disciple of Jesus Christ begins! It is a wonderful life journey. We at St. John's Reformed Church rejoice with you and are committed to sharing this journey with you.



Thoughts on Baptism

God's people should be baptized because God commanded it, not because some church requires it. –John Rice

It is of no consequence to what nation or condition anyone may belong. Neither is gender or civil rank to be of consequence. Why? Because Christ makes them all one. Whatever have been their former differences, Christ alone is able to unite them all. You are one; the distinction is removed. –John Calvin

The Lord was baptized, not to be cleansed Himself, but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of baptism. –Ambrose the Great

Baptism is ransom, forgiveness of debts, death of sin, regeneration of the soul, a resplendent garment, an unbreakable seal, a chariot to heaven, a royal protector, a gift of adoption. –Basil the Great

The Church does not dispense the sacrament of baptism in order to acquire for herself an increase in membership but in order to consecrate a human being to God and to

communicate to that person the divine gift of birth from God.

— Hans Urs von Balthasar

Baptism is, in fact, much more than a ritual conferring membership in a community, as many people conceive it nowadays. It is a process of birth, through which a new dimension of life opens out. –Peter Seewald

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Baptism Q and A



Theology and Practice at
St. John's Reformed
Church

The Sacrament of Baptism

A sacrament is a sacred moment in which God is uniquely present in the life and being of an individual or community. Sacraments are also called divine mysteries. Sacraments are outward signs of God's inward working of grace. Baptism uses the outward sign of water to demonstrate that God is doing a particular work within the life of his people. In Baptism we believe that a person is sealed by the Holy Spirit and is thereby set within God's community of faith—the Church of Jesus Christ. There are many analogies in scripture to which the sacrament of baptism points: the ark of Noah on the waters, safely protecting God's people, the crossing of the Red Sea to bring God's people to the promised land, and the waters used for cleansing in the Old Testament all point to things which baptism represents in the life of the believer. In the Old Testament, the mark of circumcision was given to Abraham and his descendants as an outward sign that they belonged to God and were members of God's covenant community. In his letter to the Colossian church in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul equates the sacrament of baptism to that of the rite of circumcision in the Old Testament (Colossians 2:11-12). In baptism we are marked with the sign of water, but even after the water is dried up, the seal of the Holy Spirit remains marking the individual as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ, and making them members of his Church. The Scripture says it this way: *We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal* (2 Corinthians 4:18). Therefore, we believe that when the water, which is temporal, is gone; the seal of the Holy Spirit, which is eternal, remains on the baptized marking them in all of the earth and heavens as a child of God.

Frequently Asked Questions about Baptism

Q: How did the Church begin the practice of baptism?

A: This came about because Jesus Christ submitted himself to baptism that John the Baptist administered for repentance of sin, in order that he (Jesus) might fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:13-17). Later Jesus commanded his followers to go into the world and baptize everyone in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). The Church of Jesus Christ has since this time in unbroken practice, continued the sacrament of baptism.

Q: Does the Reformed Church have godparents at baptisms?

A: No, the congregation as an entire body makes the vows that are taken by godparents in other denominations. We do, however, allow and encourage family members wish to stand with the parent(s) of the infant as they wish.

Q: Does the Reformed Church baptize infants only?

A: No, we baptize individuals of any age provided that they have not been previously baptized. We recognize baptisms from all major Christian denominations including: Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, as well as many other Christian denominations and independent churches.

Q: What methods of baptism are used in the Reformed Church?

A: The Reformed Church permits all forms of baptism: immersion, sprinkling, and pouring. All forms of baptism point to symbolism found in the Scripture. Immersion points to the death and burial of Christ and His resurrection from the dead. Sprinkling reaches back to the Old Testament where the blood of sacrifices (a foreshadowing of Christ) was sprinkled for the cleansing of sins. Pouring points to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, reminding us that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism and later upon His Church on the day of Pentecost. The most common form of baptism used in the Reformed Church is pouring.

Q: Why should my child or I be baptized?

A: Baptism is not a cultural rite but a sacred covenant that is established between an individual and God and an individual and God's covenant community—the Church of Jesus Christ. Those who seek baptism for themselves or their child should only do so if they are ready to enter into and fulfill vows to God and the covenant community and to begin a lifelong journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Q: I sometimes feel cultural or family pressure regarding baptism. Should I seek baptism to meet those expectations?

Baptism should never be undertaken unless one is ready to make and keep their baptismal vows. We do not believe that baptism should be done simply because it is culturally driven or expected on the part of the family as "something we do." Baptism is the *beginning* of a lifetime commitment to God and the Church, not the means to meet cultural or family expectations.

Q: Some denominations baptize only adults, so why does the Reformed Church baptize infants?

A: Some Christian traditions believe that since Jesus was baptized as an adult that this is the pattern that must be maintained. They would also state that there are no infants baptized in the New Testament. However, this is an argument based upon silence since the New Testament also does not state that infants were not baptized. They would further maintain that a confession of faith in Jesus Christ must be made prior to baptism. The Reformed Church sees baptism from Paul's understanding: that is, as a rite that superseded circumcision (which was performed on the eighth day after a male child was born). It marks a continuity of covenant theology of the Old Testament with that of the New Testament. Children of God's faith community in the Old Testament were viewed from birth as part of that community. It is also the case that the generation of Christians immediately following the New Testament period began baptizing their children. That pattern was continued without interruption until the radical reformation in the 1600's. Denominations that practice infant baptism include: Orthodox, Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Reformed, Lutheran, and Methodist. The Reformed Church also believes that infant baptism is a beautiful picture of our theology, which maintains that humanity can only be redeemed through the free grace of a loving God and can do nothing to merit that salvation, since we are justified before God by the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Finally we believe that God is not limited in the ability to communicate faith and grace (Luke 1:41) only to adults.

Q: When and where are baptisms held?

A: Except in extenuating circumstances, baptisms are held in the Church at a regularly scheduled time of worship. This is done because baptism is a public exchange of vows and the confessing members of St. John's Reformed Church need to be present in order to make their vows to the baptismal candidate.