

Infant/ Child Baptism
Infant Dedication
Celebrating God's Covenant

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:18-20

Baptism is very clearly commanded in Scripture by Jesus Himself. Presbyterians baptize infants because it is a sign of the covenant between God and His people. God's covenant is His promise to make us His people, cleanse us from sin, draw us into relationship with Him and His family, the church, and to work His gracious transformation in us.

The church has disagreed since the Reformation over how and when baptism should occur in a Christian's life. At Third Church, we believe parents are the primary spiritual guides in their children's lives. We believe that baptism is essential and are committed to teaching biblically about the meaning of baptism, but allow freedom for parents to decide when the sacrament will be applied for their children.

The Essential Tenets of the ECO state that "the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs that are linked to the things signified, sealing us to the promises of Jesus. 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 in the Spirit; in the Baptism of adults, we confess our confidence that God's grace can make us new creations at any stage in our lives."

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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39

Presbyterians baptize in infancy as a sign of the covenant between God and His people. It is considered the New Testament equivalent to circumcision in the Old Testament. Baptism as an infant does not guarantee salvation. Children who are baptized as infants are raised by their parents in the church trusting that God is at work in the life of their child, looking to Him to enable their children to grow to place their trust in Christ at each stage of their development.

In preparing for baptism, we are committed to a time of instruction and connection to others in the church. We hold two different classes for this purpose. The first is for those who are baptizing a child at Third for the first time, and focuses on biblical instruction on baptism from one of our pastors. The second is for parents who have completed the first class, and is a time of connection with other parents to share successes and difficulties you have had nurturing and modeling faith to your children at home. Prior to entering these classes we can make available a booklet providing an excellent explanation of infant baptism, titled *Why do we Baptize Infants?* by Bryan Chapell. Please feel free to request one if you would like to explore this further.

If you decide to baptize your infant, call the office and talk to Andi Redmond to find out when the next class will be held. After the class, parents will work individually with Andi to schedule a Sunday that suits their family for the baptism.

Third Church also allows parents to dedicate their children during the worship service. As with infant baptism, a child who is dedicated will need to declare their own faith when they are older in order to be saved. Because they have not been baptized, however, a baptism would occur once the child accepted Christ either as a child who is old enough to understand forgiveness of sins and the need for Jesus as Savior, or as a believing adult.

If you decide to dedicate your infant, you will still be asked to attend the infant baptism class. Call the office and talk to Andi Redmond to find out when the next class will be held and then after the class you will work individually with Andi to come up with a Sunday to have your child dedicated.

Parents may also present their older children to be baptized. Older children are baptized as believers. If your child has never been baptized, has accepted Christ, and indicates that they would like to be baptized, set up a meeting through Andi Redmond for your child to talk with one of our elders. Afterwards, contact Andi to set up a date for your child's baptism during the worship service.

Infant baptism, infant dedication, and child's believer baptism are all done corporately as a part of the worship service. It is a celebration of the whole church body, and a promise by its members to assist parents in raising their children to know and love God.

One of our great church fathers, St. Augustine wrote "In the non-essentials, freedom; in the essentials, unity; in all things, love." This is the philosophy we embrace here at Third Church.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13

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Resources:

Why do We Baptize Infants? by Bryan Chapell (P & R Publishing)

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