



BAPTISM AT GENEVA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The sacrament of baptism is the outward sign that God loves us, that we belong to God, and that we are part of the church community.

The baptism of believers witnesses to the truth that God’s gift of grace calls for our grateful response. The baptism of our young children witnesses to the truth that God claims people in love even before they are able to respond in faith. These two forms of witness are one and the same Sacrament.

At Geneva Presbyterian Church, we celebrate baptisms in the context of Sunday worship. If the person to be baptized is an infant or child, it is our usual practice that at least one of the parents of the child be a member of Geneva Presbyterian Church. Youth and adults who have not previously received this sacrament may be baptized at the time that they join the church. Because of the logistics of our baptismal font and worship space, baptism is done by pouring or sprinkling.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recognizes all baptisms by other Christian churches that are administered with water and performed in the name of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

WHY BAPTIZE INFANTS & YOUNG CHILDREN?

Presbyterians like to speak about baptism as a covenant. We believe that the children of believers are included in the covenant of baptism. In Acts 2:39, when believers and their families were being instructed to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, we read:

For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

At Geneva Presbyterian Church, we are serious about the responsibility of helping children come to know, love, obey, and serve Jesus Christ. Because God's grace precedes and calls forth our response of faith, it is normal in the Presbyterian Church (USA) for parents who are followers of Jesus Christ and active church members to present their children for baptism as infants and very young children. Baptism is, however, possible at any age. Some parents prefer to wait until the child is able to personally answer the baptismal questions, rather than to speak for their child.



In baptizing children, we trust that eventually God will bring them to a time in their lives when they want to embrace their baptism by making their own public profession of faith before the elders of the church, and by covenanting to be adult members of the Presbyterian Church (USA).



PROMISES MADE AT BAPTISM

When you present your child for baptism, you publicly announce that you believe in Jesus Christ and show that you want your child to learn about him, come to know him personally, love him, and learn to serve him as a beloved disciple. Toward the beginning of the baptismal liturgy, you will be asked:

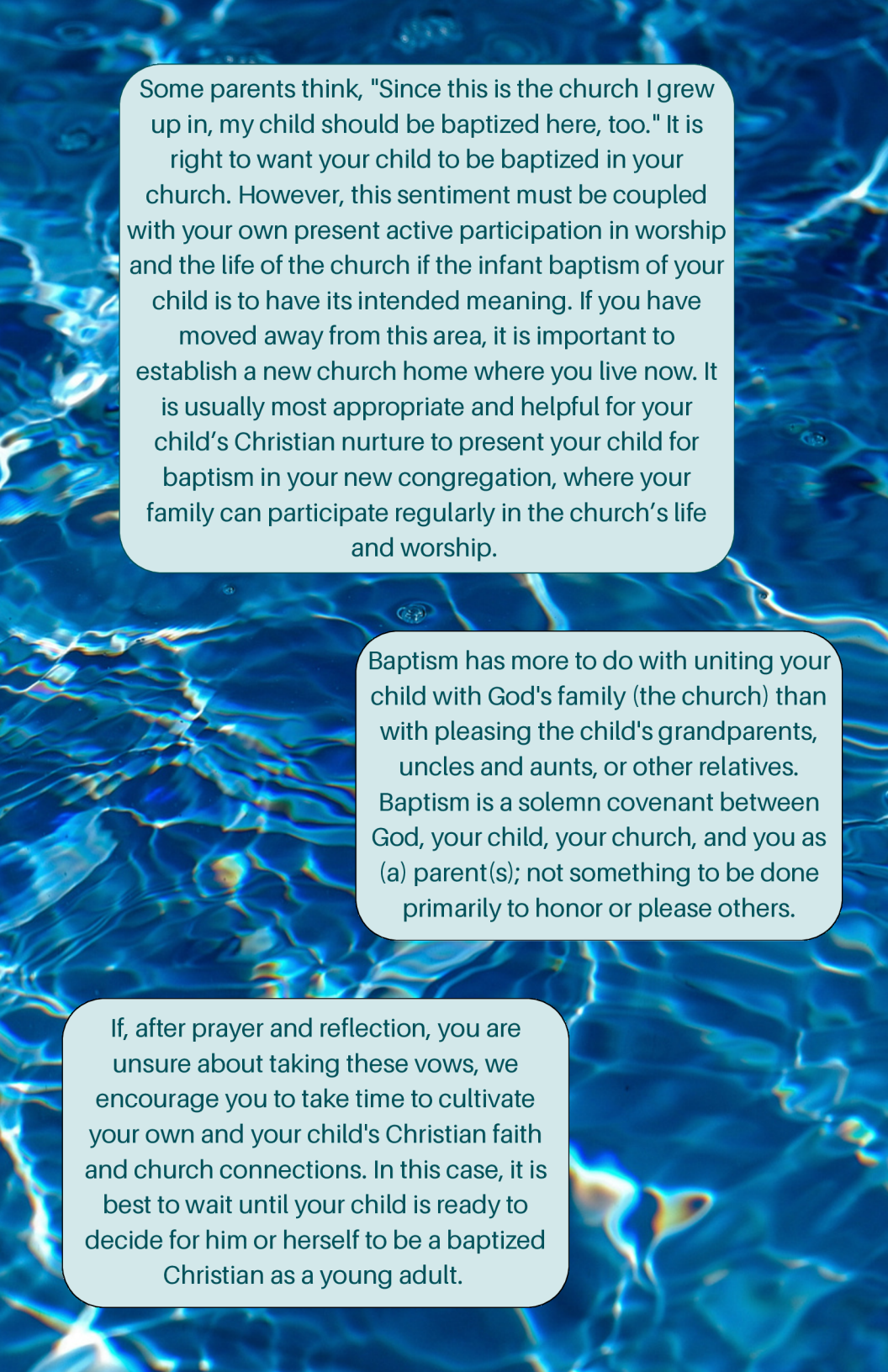
- *“Do you desire that N. be baptized?”* and then
- *“Relying on God’s grace, do you promise to live the Christian faith, and to teach that faith to your child?”*

The sponsors, if there are any, are then asked this question: *“Do you promise, through prayer and example, to support and encourage N. to be a faithful Christian?”* A sponsor is someone whose life in faith is exemplary and who takes special spiritual responsibility for your child through her/his/their life.

The congregation is then asked: *“Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture N. by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of his church?”*

Finally, the sacramental liturgy moves to your Profession of Faith.

- *Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?*
- *Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love?*
- *Will you be Christ’s faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?*



Some parents think, "Since this is the church I grew up in, my child should be baptized here, too." It is right to want your child to be baptized in your church. However, this sentiment must be coupled with your own present active participation in worship and the life of the church if the infant baptism of your child is to have its intended meaning. If you have moved away from this area, it is important to establish a new church home where you live now. It is usually most appropriate and helpful for your child's Christian nurture to present your child for baptism in your new congregation, where your family can participate regularly in the church's life and worship.

Baptism has more to do with uniting your child with God's family (the church) than with pleasing the child's grandparents, uncles and aunts, or other relatives. Baptism is a solemn covenant between God, your child, your church, and you as (a) parent(s); not something to be done primarily to honor or please others.

If, after prayer and reflection, you are unsure about taking these vows, we encourage you to take time to cultivate your own and your child's Christian faith and church connections. In this case, it is best to wait until your child is ready to decide for him or herself to be a baptized Christian as a young adult.