



Warrenpoint
Presbyterian
Church



What we believe about Infant Baptism

Baptism is one of the two sacraments of our church. Just like Communion, it must not be treated lightly. Baptism is not about 'making a baby a Christian' or giving them a name. Therefore in the Reformed faith we avoid the word "christening". Jesus never spoke about "christening" people, but calls us to baptise them. It is important that we understand baptism correctly as many people think that it is their right to have a child baptised, even though there is no personal commitment to Jesus Christ and his church.

When parents bring their children to be baptised, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland asks parents to consider:

- Are you committed to your church?
- Do you attend Sunday worship regularly?
- Are you prepared to accept the preparation the minister provides?
- Can you wholeheartedly and faithfully profess faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord?
- Will you, with your children, be regularly involved in the life of your local congregation?

In what circumstances does Baptism take place?

- In the Presbyterian Church in Ireland it is necessary that at least one parent professes faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- In the vast majority of cases the parents ought to be married and living within the family unit.
- The parents and children should be attending church regularly.

- The baptism is in most cases conducted at a church service in the presence of the congregation.

- Baptism is to be conducted once only for any child.

When your child is therefore baptised, he or she becomes part of the bigger family of the Presbyterian Church.

Why we believe in Infant Baptism

We are a covenant community

When God made a covenant with Abraham, the father of all believers, he said,

"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."

(Gen 17:7).

This covenant was based on an earlier promise God made to Abraham, namely,

- To make of Abraham a great nation and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him.
- To make Abraham a father of many nations (Gen 12:1-3; 17:2-9)

Circumcision was to be the permanent sign of this everlasting covenant with Abraham.

A biblical covenant is an agreement found in the Bible between God and His people. In this case, God took the initiative to choose Abraham and his descendants. He made promises to them, namely to be their God. He promised to be their God and they should be His people through faith. This covenant was extended in Christ to all people who have faith in Jesus. Paul writes,

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ...for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

(Gal 3:26-29)

Living in a covenant community is a wonderful blessing but must be taken seriously. To that end we as a congregation seek to create an atmosphere where our children will come to know Christ and will be taught to live according to His word.

Vows

As the parents of children are asked to make vows before God and in front of the congregation, the congregation herself makes a vow of responsibility to the children belonging to her.

The minister will ask, "*According to the Lord's command, this child is now received into the holy catholic church, and is engaged to be Christ's faithful servant and friend to his/her life's end. Do you now receive this child into this Church, promise to pray for him/her and his/her parents, maintain the shared life of worship, and help to care for her and all the children of this Church, so that they may come to know God, and love and serve Christ through the power of his Spirit?*"

The vows of parents

- 1. Do you believe and trust in God as your Father, in Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and in the Holy Spirit as your Comforter and Helper?*
- 2. Do you acknowledge that our children, although conceived and born in sin and therefore subject to condemnation itself, are nevertheless sanctified in Christ, and therefore ought to be baptised as members of His church?*
- 3. Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?*
- 4. As you desire that he/she may be grafted into Christ as a member of his body, the Church, do you receive the teaching of the faith which we confess in the Apostles' Creed?*

- 5. In presenting this child for baptism into this Faith, do you promise in humble reliance upon God's grace*
 - to teach this child the truths and duties of the Christian faith;*
 - to bring him/her up in the life, worship and teaching of the Church;*
 - to encourage him/her to enter fully into its life and its witness in the world;*
 - to provide a Christian home for your child, where by your example he/she may learn to put his/her trust in Jesus Christ and live for him in a personal relationship;*
 - and to pray with and for him/her?*
- 6. Do you unreservedly dedicate your child to God?*

Communion and Baptism

In some churches, only communicant members can bring their children to be baptised. This is not the case in Warrenpoint. However, it is an ideal time to address communicant membership if the parents are not communicants. Public profession of faith is also our answer to the promises of God at our own baptism. As the preparation and promises are very similar it would be recommended that the parent(s) making the vows also come into church membership if that is not already the case.

Don't make a rash promise

The Minister and Kirk Session advise all parents to think about the above promises and to consider their relationship with God. This should be a time of celebration and blessing as we share together in the wonderful promises of our Heavenly Father. Therefore preparation for parents bringing children for baptism is essential, where there will be support and encouragement as well as an opportunity to explore the deeper meaning and importance of this sacrament.

Please speak to the Minister or an Elder for more information.