



Warrenpoint
Presbyterian
Church



What we believe about Adult Baptism

Baptism is one of the two sacraments of our church. Just like Communion, it must not be treated lightly. Baptism is a onetime event and should not be repeated. If a person has received a Trinitarian baptism, ie. 'In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirt' as a child or as an adult we as a congregation are pleased to accept that. All believing parents are called to bring their children forward for baptism, however if for whatever reason a person has never been baptised as an infant, upon coming to faith they ought to be baptised as an adult. Baptism is not about 'making a person 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 recognise adult baptism correctly as many people misunderstand the position of the Reformed Faith on this issue and how it relates to a commitment to Jesus Christ and his church.

When considering baptism, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland asks a person 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 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 the person in question professes faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.*
- *The person in question ought to show that they are living life in light of that profession in a credible way.*
- *That in most cases they are regular in attend at church.*
- *The baptism is in most cases conducted at a church service in the presence of the congregation as a public act.*
- *Baptism is to be conducted once only for any individual.*

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

Why we believe that baptism is important in the Christian Life

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

Vows

As the person in question is asked to make vows before God and in front of the congregation, the congregation herself makes a vow of responsibility to those belonging to her.

The Minister will ask, "*According to the Lord's command, this person 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 person into this Church, promise to pray for him/her as they move forward in their faith, maintain the shared life of worship, and help to care for them and all the members of this Church as brothers and sisters in Christ, so that as a church we may come to deeper knowledge of God, love and serve Christ through the power of his Spirit?*"

The vows of the person being baptised

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 you were born in sin and therefore subject to condemnation itself, and are in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?*
3. *As you desire to 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?*
4. *In presenting yourself for baptism into this Faith, do you promise in humble reliance upon God's grace*
 - *to seek to learn and live out the truths and duties of the Christian faith:*
 - *to enter fully into the church and her life and witness in the world:*
 - *to live for Christ through personal prayer and Bible study*

5. *Do you unreservedly dedicate your life to God?*

Communion and Baptism

As the preparation and promises are very similar it would be recommended that the person in question would also come into church membership and only in exceptional circumstances would this not be the case.

The 'mode' of Baptism

The 'mode' or 'method' of baptism concerning how much water is used and how in relation to adult baptism is a discussion that has long divided the Christian church. Within the Reformed Faith we tend towards baptism by pouring and/or sprinkling rather than full immersion. This relates to the Old Testament practice of cleansing via pouring and sprinkling upon which the concept of baptism is primarily based. The Minister is happy to discuss this issue in further detail should there be any questions surrounding this aspect of the congregation's baptismal policy.

Don't make a rash promise

The Minister and Kirk Session advise anyone considering baptism 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 leading up to 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.