

Baptism Policy

Baptisms are another especial privilege for a pastor to administer and for a Session to authorize. The pastor lacks the authority to act on his or her own in performing the Sacrament of Baptism. It remains a central act of the community of faith.

Our baptismal policy at Grove Presbyterian Church is simple: we adhere to the Presbyterian Constitution. Our procedure tailors itself to the need of the family. We have no specified Sundays on which baptism takes place; we are glad to work with the family in selecting an appropriate and meaningful date. The parents may choose any Elder in the Grove congregation to stand with them and help officiate at the Sacrament. Except for the most unusual of circumstances, all baptisms shall take place during public worship. The child will be brought forward during the worship service and the parent(s) will be asked these questions:

- ◆ Do you reaffirm you own faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?
- ◆ Do you claim God's covenant promises on your child behalf and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for her/her salvation as you do for your own?
- ◆ Do you now unreservedly promise, in humble reliance upon God's grace, to set before your child an example of the new life in Christ?
- ◆ Do you promise to pray with and for him/her and to bring him/her up in the knowledge and love of God?

Any member may request baptism to be conducted on their infant or child's behalf. The pastor, upon receiving this request informs Session of the desire. By formal vote, Session approves the Sacrament to take place. It remains the duties of Session to "*admit to Baptism children of believers, after appropriate instruction and discussion with the parent(s) or one(s) rightly exercising parental responsibility, acquainting them with the significance of what God is doing in this act, and with the special responsibilities on parents and congregations for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life.*" It is inappropriate for parents to request baptism if they do not intend to keep their promises.

It is the obligation of Session to insure that at least one the parents is a professing Christian. One cannot be a professing Christian without active participation in a community of faith. **Neither Baptism nor Christianity is an individual or private enterprise.** Ordinarily, at least one of the parents shall be an active member of the congregation. Promises made should be promises kept.

It furthermore is the obligation of Session to insure that the question posed to the congregation at the time of baptism (when the elder asks the congregation if they promise to assume responsibility for the nurture and admonition of the baptized child) can be answered with integrity. **It is difficult and inappropriate to expect a congregation to make this pledge if the parents do not actively belong to the same community of faith:**

- ◆ Do you, the members of this congregation, in the name of the whole Church of Christ, undertake with these parents the Christian nurture of this child, so that in due time she/he may confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?
- ◆ Will you endeavor by your example and fellowship to strengthen his/her family ties with the household of God?

On occasions, when former members of Grove Presbyterian Church (because of a special bond to the congregation) consider it meaningful to have their child baptized at Grove, the Session may authorize the baptism to take place at Grove. Two conditions, however, must be met: first, at least one of the parents must be an active member of another congregation; second, the governing body of the parent(s) congregation shall deputize the Grove congregation and pastor to act as its agents.