



What is Baptism?

Baptism is a sign of a covenant promise of God to his people, directly instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has directed that water is to be applied in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to represent to us and assure us of the glorious realities of union with Christ, forgiveness of sins by his blood, regeneration by his Holy Spirit, adoption into the family of God, and our hope of resurrection to everlasting life.

By baptism, the recipients are solemnly, publicly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.

Who Should Receive Baptism?

Baptism is a new covenant sign. That is, it points to and confirms the gracious saving promise of God to his people and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. It is to be administered to believers and their children, as can be seen from Genesis 17, Matthew 28, Colossians 2, 1 Corinthians 7, and Acts 16.

Hence, at Westminster Church, we baptize the children of believers, as well as adult professing believers who have not been previously baptized, in accordance with Scripture. Adult and infant baptisms are scheduled as needed, and are administered during the Sunday morning worship service.

Why Do We Baptize?

Christ Commands It...

To elaborate, Christian baptism is, first, commanded by Christ in Matthew 28 ("Go and...make disciples...baptizing...and...teaching them").

...For All Believers...

Second, it is to be applied to believers, as we see in Acts 8 ("Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning to see from Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And

Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him").

...And Their Children

Third, it is to be administered to believers and their children, as can be seen from Genesis 17 ("I will establish my covenant between me, and you, and your descendants") -- which shows that the normal order of discipleship in the church is baptism followed by teaching; Colossians 2 ("[In Christ] you were also circumcised...having been buried with Him in baptism") -- which shows that NT water baptism replaces OT circumcision as the sign of membership in the church; 1 Corinthians 7 ("your children are...now...holy") -- which confirms the place of children in the new covenant community, the church; and Acts 16 ("Lydia...was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And...she and her household [were] baptized") -- which shows us the pattern of the earliest church in covenant baptism.

Baptism (and especially "infant baptism" or covenant baptism) beautifully points to the initiative of God's love. He reached out to us when we could not reach out to him. It is thus a perfect picture of sovereign, saving grace. "Every time we baptize an infant we bear witness that salvation is from God, that we cannot do any good thing to secure it, that we all enter the kingdom of heaven therefore as little children, who do not do, but are done for" (B.B. Warfield).

We, of course, also baptize adult believers (who have never before been baptized). In this way they are recognized as disciples of Jesus Christ through the means of baptism and confession of faith (see Acts 2:38, 8:35-37, Romans 10:9), and so it is our great joy and privilege from time to time, to hear new Christians profess their trust in Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Savior of sinners, as He is offered in the gospel, and to see them receive the mark of membership in the covenant community