



## Guidelines for Baptisms

### Pottstown First United Methodist Church

Pottstown, PA 19464

"Baptism is an outward and visible sign of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which grace we become partakers of His righteousness and heirs of life eternal. Those receiving the Sacrament are thereby marked as Christian disciples and initiated into the fellowship of Christ's holy Church."

"Baptism is not only a sign of profession and a mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church." (The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 1992, p 63)

"Because the redeeming love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, extends to all persons, and because Jesus explicitly included children in his Kingdom, the pastor of each charge shall earnestly exhort all Christian parents or guardians to present their children to the Lord in Baptism at an early age. Before Baptism is administered, the pastor shall diligently instruct the parents or guardians regarding the meaning of this Sacrament and the vows which they assume.

It is expected of parents or guardians who present their children for Baptism that they shall use all diligence in bringing them up in conformity to the Word of God and in the fellowship of the Church. It is desired that one or both parents or guardians shall be members of a Christian church or that sponsors who are members shall assume the baptismal vows. They shall be admonished of this obligation and be earnestly exhorted to faithfulness therein. At the time of Baptism they shall be informed that the church, with its church school program, will aid them in the Christian nurture of their children." (The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 1992, par. 221) The purpose of this Sacrament is:

- ◆ To recognize publicly that this child already belongs to God and that this life is to be treated as a divine gift and trust;
- ◆ To admit publicly the nature of Original Sin and the need of all people of God's grace as it is found in His Word and Sacraments (The Articles of Religion, VII);
- ◆ To proclaim publicly that God's gift of new life in Christ is free and is offered to us even before we have the capacity to understand it;
- ◆ To provide the opportunity for Christian parents or sponsors to publicly assume the responsibilities called for in the baptismal vows, namely: to confess their own faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; to live before the child a life that becomes the Gospel; to exercise all godly care that he/she be brought up in the Christian faith; that he/she be taught the Holy Scriptures, that he/she learn to give reverent attendance upon the private

and public worship of God; and to keep the child under the ministry and guidance of the Church until he/she, by the power of God, shall accept himself/herself the gift of salvation and be confirmed as a full and responsible member of Christ's holy church; and

- ◆ To provide opportunity for the congregation to renew these same responsibilities and obligations as a Christian congregation.

In accord with the meaning and purpose of the Sacrament of Baptism the following standards are your pastor's practice.

- ◆ The Sacrament shall be administered with the participation of the congregation at a stated hour of worship except in the circumstances of emergency (or in instances where Baptism by immersion is requested). In the event of an emergency or some handicap or in cases where immersion is requested lay persons shall accompany the pastor and represent the congregation in the administration of the Sacrament.
- ◆ Baptisms are to be conducted at times appropriate in Church calendar and year. Due to the nature of the seasons baptisms will not be conducted during Advent or Lent. Normally baptisms will be scheduled at the following times or dates in the year:
  - ▶ The Baptism of the Lord (Sunday after January 6)
  - ▶ Easter Sunday, or during an Easter Vigil service.
  - ▶ Any Sunday during the Easter Season
  - ▶ All Saints Day (The First Sunday in November)
  - ▶ Other Sundays deemed appropriate by the Pastor where the sacrament of Baptism can be fully incorporated into the worship service.
- ◆ Children should be baptized in the local church where the pastor can give continuing pastoral care.

- ◆ The Sacrament of Baptism shall be administered prior to or at the time of Confirmation or reception into membership.
- ◆ Before the pastor shall administer the Sacrament of Infant Baptism, one or both parents shall show proof of full membership with the local church, or in some branch of Christ's Church.
- ◆ The parents or sponsors of the child being baptised must have attended the services of the church on a regular basis (at least 3 Sundays over the previous 2 months).
- ◆ In the event that neither parent is a member of the Christian Church and there is no desire to unite in membership with the local church, then the Church Council, working with the pastor, shall approve the appointment of sponsors who can assume in sincerity the solemn vows and promises on behalf of the child. They shall also attend pre-baptismal class(es) with the parents.
- ◆ When one or both parents are members of the Christian Church, sponsors or godparents are not required.
- ◆ The pastor shall meet with both parents in pre-baptismal class (es) prior to the administration for the purpose of instruction, at which time he shall explain the meaning and purpose of the holy Sacrament.
- ◆ When members of our church living beyond worshipping distance wish to return here for the baptism of their children, the pastor will arrange with them and the pastor of the church in their present location for pre-baptismal preparation and the transfer of preparatory membership.
- ◆ There is no fee for the administration of this Sacrament.
- ◆ Adults seeking baptism will participate in adult membership training.

### **Personal comment on the above by the Pastor.**

Let it be emphasized that the purpose of the above is NOT to deny any child holy Baptism. It is only to say that certain requirements must be met BEFORE the baptism takes place. My purpose in doing all this is not to tow the line with rules and regulations. These are simply set up in an effort to emphasize the seriousness, the sacredness, and the responsibilities of Christian Baptism.

## The Baptismal Covenant

Following is the service for baptism used at First United Methodist Church. This service takes place after the reading and proclamation of the Word as a response to its hearing.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE BAPTISM COVENANT

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit.

All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

### RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ. Parents or other sponsors reaffirm these vows for themselves while taking the responsibility of Sponsorship. The pastor speaks the words in regular print, the parents or sponsor answer with the words in **bold**, and the congregation speaks the words in **bold and italic**.

The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin? **I do.**

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

**I do.**

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races? **I do.**

Will you nurture *these children (persons)* in Christ's holy Church, that by your teaching and example she may be guided to accept God's grace for *themselves*, to profess *their* faith openly, and to lead a Christian life? **I will.**

The pastor addresses the congregation, and the congregation responds:

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ? ***We do.***

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include *these persons* now before you in your care?

***With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ.***

***We will surround (these persons) with a community of love and forgiveness, that (they) may grow in (their) trust of God, and be found faithful in (their) service to others.***

***We will pray for (them), that (they) may be a true disciples, who walk in the way that leads to life.***

The pastor addresses all, and the congregation joins parents and sponsors in responding:

Let us join together in professing the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?

***I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.***

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, [who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried: he descended to the dead.***

***On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father and will come again to judge the living and the dead.]***

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, [the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.]***

## THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

This prayer recalls scriptural images and meanings of Holy Baptism and is comparable to the prayer of Great Thanksgiving at Holy Communion.

The Lord be with you. *And also with you.*

Let us pray.

Eternal Father: When nothing existed but chaos,  
you swept across the dark waters and brought forth light.

In the days of Noah you saved those on the ark through water.

After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow.

When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt,  
you led them to freedom through the sea.

Their children you brought through the Jordan to the land  
which you promised.

*Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Tell of God's mercy each day.*

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus, nurtured in the water of a womb.

He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit.

He called his disciples to share in the baptism of his death and  
resurrection and to make disciples of all nations.

*Declare his works to the nations, his glory among all people.*

Pour out your Holy Spirit,

to bless this gift of water and all who receive it, to wash away their  
sin, and clothe them in righteousness throughout their lives,

that, dying and being raised with Christ,

they may share in his final victory.

*All praise to you, Eternal Father, through your Son Jesus Christ,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever. Amen.*

## BAPTISM WITH LAYING ON OF HANDS

As each candidate is baptized, the pastor uses his or her Christian name:

*Christian Name(s)*, I baptize you in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Immediately after baptism, the pastor places hands on the candidate's head and invokes  
the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit work within you that being born through the water and  
the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

The pastor now addresses the congregation, which responds:

Now it is our joy to welcome our new *sisters and brothers* in Christ.  
*Through baptism you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit into God's  
new creation and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood.  
We are all one in Christ Jesus, and so with joy and thanksgiving we  
welcome you as (members) of the family of Christ.*

## PLEASE NOTE:

WHEN YOU ANSWER AFFIRMATIVELY THE QUESTIONS FROM  
THE SERVICE OF BAPTISM, THESE ACTIONS ARE IMPLIED:

1. We will attend Church regularly in order that we may learn more about Christ and the Christian faith in which our Child is baptized, and through our participation in worship, may be better prepared to teach our Child the principles of our religion.
2. We will study the facts and principles of our Christian faith until they become clear to us, so that as our Child grows in body, mind, and spirit, we may be able to answer his/her questions clearly guide his/her thinking rightly, and nurture his/her soul lovingly.
3. We will encourage our Child's participation in Church School, in Church, and in Youth Fellowship Groups when the time comes, and we will do all we can to cooperate and help in the effective carrying out of these programs of our Church as it seeks to help us in raising our Child in abundant, well rounded life of a Christian adult.
4. We will have a time of daily worship in our home, beginning with giving thanks at meals and bedtime prayers, even while our Child is yet a baby. As he/she grows we will read to him such things as will help him/her grow in his/her understanding of God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord; we will talk with him/her about these things; and we will teach him/her to pray. We realize that the first six years of his/her life, at home with us, will have the most influence on his/her character, his/her way of life, and his/her attitude toward life. We want them to be good years, full of Christian influence.