

Baptism

Jesus and Baptism (W-2.3001)

Baptism is the sign and seal of incorporation into Christ. Jesus through his own baptism identified himself with sinners in order to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus in his own baptism was attested Son by the Father and was anointed with the Holy Spirit to undertake the way of the servant manifested in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. Jesus the risen Lord assured his followers of his continuing presence and power and commissioned them 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matt. 28:19, NRSV). The disciples were empowered by the outpouring of the Spirit to undertake a life of service and to be an inclusive worshipping community, sharing life in which love, justice, and mercy abounded.

Dying and Rising in Baptism (W-2.3002)

In baptism, we participate in Jesus' death and resurrection. In baptism, we die to what separates us from God and are raised to newness of life in Christ, pointing us back to the grace of God expressed in Jesus Christ, who died for us and who was raised for us. Baptism points us forward to that same Christ who will fulfill God's purpose in God's promised future.

Covenant and the Water of Baptism (W-2.3003)

In baptism, the Holy Spirit binds the Church in covenant to its Creator and Lord. The water of baptism symbolizes the waters of creation, of the flood, and of the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the water of baptism links us to the goodness of God's creation and to the grace of God's covenants with Noah and Israel. Prophets of Israel, amidst the failure of their own generation to honor God's covenant, called for justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream. (Amos 5:24) They envisioned a fresh expression of God's grace and of creation's goodness – a new covenant accompanied by the sprinkling of cleansing water. In his ministry, Jesus offered the gift of living water. So, baptism is the sign and seal of God's grace and covenant in Christ.

Inclusion in the Covenant of Grace (W-2.3004)

As circumcision was the sign and symbol of inclusion in God's grace and covenant with Israel, so baptism is with the Church. As an identifying mark, baptism signifies

- a. the faithfulness of God,
- b. the washing away of sin,
- c. rebirth,
- d. putting on the fresh garment of Christ,
- e. being sealed by God's Spirit,
- f. adoption into the covenant family of the Church,
- g. resurrection and illumination in Christ.



John baptizing Jesus in the Jordan

Union with Christ and One Another (W-2.3005)

The body of Christ is one, and baptism is the bond of unity in Christ. As they are united with Christ through faith, baptism unites the people of God with each other and with the church of every time and place. Barriers of race, gender, status, and age are to be transcended. Barriers of nationality, history, and practice are to be overcome.

Baptism: Grace, Repentance and Commissioning (W-2.3006)

Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is God's gift of grace and also God's summons to respond to that grace. Baptism calls to repentance, to faithfulness, and to discipleship. Baptism gives the church its identity and commissions the church for ministry to the world.

Sign and Seal of God's Faithfulness (W-2.3007)

God's faithfulness signified in baptism is constant and sure, even when human faithfulness to God is not. Baptism is received only once. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to the moment when it is administered, for baptism signifies the beginning of life in Christ, not its completion. God's grace works steadily, calling to repentance and newness of life. God's faithfulness needs no renewal. Human faithfulness to God needs repeated renewal. Baptism calls for decision at every subsequent stage of life's way, both for those whose baptism attends their profession of faith and for those who are nurtured from childhood within the family of faith.



- a. Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love. Children of believers are to be baptized without undue delay, but without undue haste. Baptism, whether administered to those who profess their faith or to those presented as children, is one and the same Sacrament.
- b. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith.
- c. The baptism of those who enter the covenant upon their own profession of faith witnesses to the truth that God's grace calls for fulfillment in a response of faithfulness.

Remembering One's Baptism (W-2.3009-3010)

Baptism is received only once. There are many times in worship, however, when believers acknowledge the grace of God continually at work. As there is one body, there is one baptism. (Eph. 4:4-6) The Presbyterian Church (USA) recognizes all baptisms with water in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit administered by other Christian churches. Baptism is celebrated in a service of public worship.

Session Responsibility (W-2.3012)

The session's responsibilities for baptism are

- a. encouraging parents to present their children for baptism, reminding them that children of believers are to be baptized without undue haste, but without undue delay, and authorizing the baptism of those presented;
- b. admitting 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;
- c. admitting to baptism, after appropriate instruction and examination, those not yet baptized who come making public their personal profession of faith;
- d. placing all baptized persons on the appropriate roll as members of the congregation;
- e. making certain that those baptized are nurtured in understanding the meaning of baptism, of the Lord's Supper, and of their interrelation, and that they are surrounded by Christian encouragement and support.

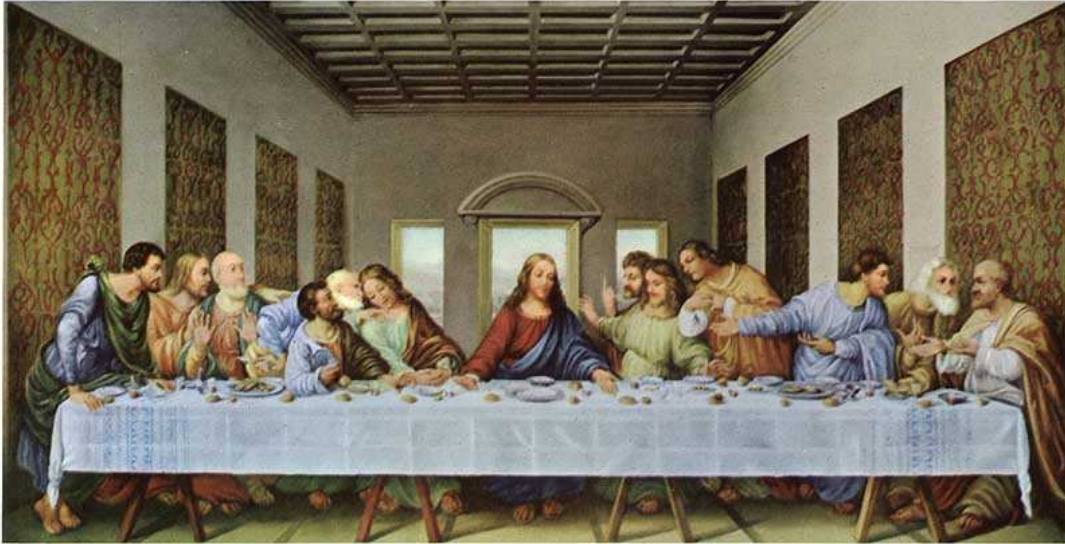
Church and Parental Responsibility (W-2.3013-3014)

The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life. When a child is being presented for baptism, ordinarily the parent(s) or one(s) rightly exercising parental responsibility shall be an active member of the congregation. Those presenting children for baptism shall promise to provide nurture and guidance within the community of faith until the child is ready to make a personal profession of faith and assume the responsibility of active church membership.

The Lord's Supper

Communion/Eucharist (W-2.4001)

- The Lord's Supper is the sign and seal of eating and drinking in communion with the crucified and risen Lord. During his earthly ministry Jesus shared meals with his followers as a sign of community and acceptance and as an occasion for his own ministry. He celebrated Israel's feasts of covenant commemoration.
- In his last meal before his death Jesus took and shared with his disciples the bread and wine, speaking of them as his body and blood, signs of the new covenant. He commended breaking bread and sharing a cup to remember and proclaim his death.
- On the day of his resurrection, the risen Jesus made himself known to his followers in the breaking of bread. He continued to show himself to believers, by blessing and breaking bread, by preparing, serving, and sharing common meals.



The Last Supper by Leonardo Da Vinci

Church in the New Testament (W-2.4002)

The Church in the New Testament devoted itself to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to prayers, and to the common meal. The apostle Paul delivered to the Church the tradition he had received from the risen Lord, who commanded that his followers share the bread and cup as a remembrance and a showing forth of his death until he comes. The New Testament describes the meal as a participation in Christ and with one another in the expectation of the Kingdom and as a foretaste of the messianic banquet.

Thanksgiving and Remembering (W-2.4003-4004)

In the Lord's Supper the Church, gathered for worship,

- blesses God for all that God has done through creation, redemption, and sanctification;
- gives thanks that God is working in the world and in the Church in spite of human sin;
- gratefully anticipates the fulfillment of the Kingdom Christ proclaimed, and offers itself in obedient service to God's reign.

At the Lord's Table, the Church is

- renewed and empowered by the memory of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and promise to return;
- sustained by Christ's pledge of undying love and continuing presence with God's people;
- sealed in God's covenant of grace through partaking of Christ's self-offering.

In remembering, believers receive and trust the love of Christ present to them and to the world; they manifest the reality of the covenant of grace in reconciling and being reconciled; and they proclaim the power of Christ's reign for the renewal of the world in justice and in peace.

Invocation (W-2.4005)

As the people of God bless and thank God the Father and remember Jesus Christ the Son, they call upon the Holy Spirit

- a. to lift them into Christ's presence;
- b. to accept their offering of bread and wine;
- c. to make breaking bread and sharing the cup a participation in the body and blood of Christ;
- d. to bind them with Christ and with one another;
- e. to unite them in communion with all the faithful in heaven and on earth;
- f. to nourish them with Christ's body and blood that they may mature into the fullness of Christ;
- g. to keep them faithful as Christ's body, representing Christ and doing God's work in the world.



Communion of the Faithful (W-2.4006)

Around the Table of the Lord, God's people are in communion with Christ and with all who belong to Christ. Reconciliation with Christ compels reconciliation with one another. All the baptized faithful are to be welcomed to the Table, and none shall be excluded because of race, sex, age, economic status, social class, handicapping condition, difference of culture or language, or any barrier created by human injustice. Coming to the Lord's Table the faithful are actively to seek reconciliation in every instance of conflict or division between them and their neighbors. Each time they gather at the Table the believing community

- a. are united with the Church in every place, and the whole Church is present;
- b. join with all the faithful in heaven and on earth in offering thanksgiving to the triune God;
- c. renew the vows taken at Baptism;

and they commit themselves afresh to love and serve God, one another, and their neighbors in the world.

Foretaste of the Kingdom Meal (W-2.4007)



In this meal the Church celebrates the joyful feast of the people of God, and anticipates the great banquet and marriage supper of the Lamb. Brought by the Holy Spirit into Christ's presence, the Church eagerly expects and prays for the day when Christ shall come in glory and God be all in all. Nourished by this hope, the Church rises from the Table and is sent by the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God's mission to the world, to proclaim the gospel, to exercise compassion, to work for justice and peace until Christ's Kingdom shall come at last.

Word and Sacrament Together (W-2.4008)

In the life of the worshiping congregation, Word and Sacrament have an integral relationship. Whenever the Lord's Supper is observed, it shall be preceded by the reading and the proclamation of the Word.

Who May Receive (W-2.4011)

- a. The invitation to the Lord's Supper is extended to all who have been baptized, remembering that access to the Table is not a right conferred upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love. In preparing to receive Christ in this Sacrament, the believer is to confess sin and brokenness, to seek reconciliation with God and neighbor, and to trust in Jesus Christ for cleansing and renewal. Even one who doubts or whose trust is wavering may come to the Table in order to be assured of God's love and grace in Christ Jesus.
- b. Baptized children who are being nurtured and instructed in the significance of the invitation to the Table and the meaning of their response are invited to receive the Lord's Supper, recognizing that their understanding will vary according to their maturity.