

Escalon Presbyterian

Baptism



The Sacrament of Baptism

The Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians

Baptism at EPC

A brief introduction to our beliefs and practice of Baptism.

Our Theological Essentials - ECO

The Spirit gathers us in a community that is built up and equipped to be light, salt, and yeast in the world. Christ sends us into the world to make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that Christ has commanded us. We are now in service to God's plan for the fullness of time: uniting all things in heaven and earth to Himself.

The Sacrament of Baptism [is a visible sign that is] linked to the thing signified, sealing to us the promises of Jesus. In the Baptism of infants, we confess our confidence in God's gracious initiative, that a baby who cannot turn to God is nonetheless claimed as a member of the covenant community, a child of God, cleansed by grace and sealed by the Spirit; in the Baptism of adults, we confess our confidence that God's grace can make us new creations at any stage of our lives. ☒

Foundational to our understanding of baptism is first that God is prime actor - he gathers us together, he sends us, he teaches us, he claims us, he gives us grace that cleanses us, he makes us new creations. Thus baptism is a visible sign signifying God's grace given to us through Jesus Christ. This is the God-centered element to the Christian faith. Secondly, baptism happens within a community of believers - the body of Christ, the church. This is the communal element of Christianity. Thirdly, baptism cannot be separated from discipleship - following Jesus Christ in faith, being obedient to what he taught us. This is the individual-commitment element of Christianity. Fourthly, the act of baptism with water is a visual sign that points to something far greater than the washing of water. It signifies God's grace towards us, which not only cleanses us once and for all, it also is a sign of the new creation - where God takes us when we were dead in sin and makes us alive again in him. This is a symbol of the new-life-in-Christ element of Christianity.

Biblical Texts for Baptism

- **Matthew 28:28** - The text of Scripture defining the mandate that the church baptize, that it happen in the context of discipleship, and that it be done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- **Ephesians 4:4-6** - Baptism is to be given once, a sign of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of God.
- **Romans 6:3-4** - Describes baptism as signifying a death to self and a rising to new life in Christ.
- **Acts 2:38-39** - Describes baptism as a sign of forgiveness of sins and the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter declares here that this promise is for all those responding as well as their children.
- **Acts 16:31-34; Acts 18:7-8** - Describes “entire households” being baptized, indicating that children of believers may have been baptized as well. Faithful Christians can agree to disagree here.

Your Invitation

Your decision to be baptized is an important part of the Christian life. Baptism is not a right, or a religious ritual. It is sign of the grace of God that ordinarily accompanies the faith of an individual who desires to follow Jesus as a disciple (a follower and a learner) and commit themselves to participation in the community of faith - the church. For adults and older children, this decision is tremendously important and should be accompanied by prayer and commitment.

Your decision as a Parent(s) to baptize your infant/child requires that you publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ, committed to raising your child in the Christian faith and within the community of faith - the church. Your child still needs to personally confess their faith in Christ and commit to being his disciple as they mature.

In both instances, baptism is a sign of God’s grace to us first, and our commitment to that grace is to follow Jesus Christ in faith.

Our Church

Here are some particular specifics to the baptismal practices of our congregation in accordance with the standards of our Presbyterian denomination (ECO - Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians).

- We believe in and encourage both infant/child and adult baptism in accordance with our understanding of Scripture.
- We baptize infants/younger children when faith in Jesus Christ and a commitment to the community of faith (the church) is present with their parent(s) and at their request.
- We will not baptize any child under the age of 18 without the expressed permission of their parent(s).
- We baptize those of all ages ordinarily in a service of worship in our sanctuary. Ordinarily, in this service of worship, one person, or, possibly, a few persons will be baptized within the regularly planned order of service.
- We have and will continue to baptize children and adults in a service of worship off-site, particularly to accommodate larger numbers of persons seeking Christian baptism. The entire congregation is invited to witness these baptisms and the Christian vows that accompany them. Ordinarily, this service of worship will also be held on a Sunday.
- We do not re-baptize those who have already received baptism. We do have an order of service for reaffirmation of the baptism already given if one wants to recommit themselves to the faith.

For Further Reading

The Essentials Tenets: Our basic beliefs. It can be found on our website or at our denominations website: eco-pres.org.