

Congratulations! The birth of a baby is a very special event and has undoubtedly brought great joy to you and your family. As parents, you should thank God for the little one entrusted to you. This leaflet is designed to help you understand what is involved in baptism.

Why do you want your baby baptised?

People have different ideas about baptism. Some think of it as a naming ceremony. Others think that a child will not thrive until it is baptised. And many people think that it is the proper thing to do for every child. Some call it a “christening” and believe that it automatically makes a child a Christian. None of these ideas are correct.

What is Baptism?

The Bible teaches that Baptism is God’s sign of salvation. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who instructed us to baptise (Matthew 28:19,20). In the Old Testament circumcision was the sign of God’s blessing of salvation promised in the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis 17:10,11). In the New Testament Baptism is the sign of the new covenant and of salvation in Christ (Colossians 2:11,12). Just as water makes us clean, so baptism pictures how God, through Jesus Christ, can make our whole lives clean, forgiving our sins and giving us new life. It is the sign and pledge that our lives are built on Christ and that he is our Lord and Saviour. Presbyterians believe that it is appropriate for **Christian parents** to have their child baptised because of God’s covenant with Abraham. The sign of the covenant was given, not only to Abraham who believed, but also to Abraham’s children. We believe that in the New Testament the promises of the covenant are extended to all **true believers and to their children**. Baptism does not mean the child immediately becomes a Christian. Although salvation is promised, in time children must trust and believe in Jesus Christ for themselves.

When **believing parents** have their children baptised they are publicly declaring they are **committed Christians**, and that they want their child to come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way and to grow to serve Him. Infant baptism is given on the basis of the qualifications of the parent, not the qualifications of the child. It is the parents’ relationship with God which is important. No minister or elder can see into the heart of another human being. They can only look at what is visible. **What is required of parents is a credible profession accompanied by some understanding of the Christian faith, a lifestyle in accordance with Christian values, and public commitment to the worshipping Christian Community.**

What parents must consider:

- Are you committed to your church?
- Do you attend Sunday worship regularly?
- Are you prepared to accept the preparation the Minister provides?
- Can you wholeheartedly and faithfully profess faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord?
- If necessary are you willing to share your testimony before the elders of the church?
- Will you, with your children, be regularly involved in the life of your local congregation?

In what circumstances does Baptism take place?

- In the Presbyterian Church in Ireland it is necessary that at least one parent professes faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
- The parents ought to be married and living within the family unit.
- The parents and children should be attending church regularly.
- The Baptism is in most cases conducted at a church service in the presence of the congregation.
- Baptism is to be conducted once only for any child.