

Talking about Baptism with Your Kids

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What is Baptism?

Baptism is one of the two sacraments of the church. Sacraments are outward signs of the invisible and visible grace of God in our lives. In baptism, we obey Jesus' commandment to: "Therefore go 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" (Matt. 28:19-20a).

In baptism we experience water and God's grace. We can see and feel and hear the water. It makes us wet! It quenches our thirst! But the grace God offers us through baptism can't be seen with our eyes or felt as we swallow it. It can only be experienced in relationship with Jesus.

What does Baptism Represent?

In baptism, a baby, older child, student, or adult joins in telling God's story through being covered with water. This single action has a lot of different meanings! Here's some of them:

- When a person is immersed into the water and then is pulled out of it, we remember that Christians have **died and risen with Christ**.
Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)
- There's a lot of water every time a baby is born! Baptism is a second birth, a **spiritual birth**, like Jesus talked about in John 3.
Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'" (John 3:5-7)
- Like a bath, the waters of baptism remind us that **God cleanses us from sin**.
Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name. (Acts 22:16)
- Baptism reminds us that **we are adopted into God's family!** All of God's children have been born again into the family of God!
So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. . . . If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)
- Baptism reminds us of other Bible stories, too, such as God's saving work for Noah and his family, and God rescuing his people from slavery when he parted the Red Sea. **God has always been in the business of offering salvation to people!** (1 Peter 3:18-22)

Who can get baptized at Hinsdale Covenant Church?

In the Evangelical Covenant Church, we practice both historic modes of Christian baptism: believer baptism and infant baptism. Each family usually chooses how they will participate in the sacrament based on their own faith background and theological convictions.

Any adult or child who professes faith in Christ alone, who renounces Satan and spiritual forces of evil, and who willingly devotes themselves to the church's teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread (communion), and prayer is invited to be baptized. In believer baptism, emphasis is placed on God's saving grace to the individual who has freely chosen to participate in the sacrament. Families who emphasize believer baptism will frequently dedicate their children to the Lord when they are infants or young toddlers.

Our denomination also practices and recognizes infant baptism for parents and their children who recognize that God works through the grace demonstrated through the Church and family. In infant baptism, we remember that all our experiences of grace start with God, not us. God is the divine initiator and his grace is sufficient for us, even when we're babies.

Sometimes, adults or older children who were baptized as an infant and who have since experienced spiritual renewal may desire to participate in a baptismal remembrance or renewal. In this public liturgy, the participant remembers and recommits to a life lived in Christ.

Each family in our congregation is invited to pray and discern with a pastor to determine which mode of baptism they will emphasize in their household. Both infant baptism and dedication remind us that our children do not belong to us. He or she first belongs to God, and each child belongs to God's community, the church. Children's ministry workers are serving as part of their fulfillment of their own vows at infant baptisms and dedications, when they promise with the community to help raise the child in faith in Christ.

Help! My child hasn't been dedicated or baptized! What should I do?

First, don't worry or feel guilty! Please know that the pastoral staff at ECCH wants to help your family understand our baptism theology and participate in this sacrament as God leads you. Infant baptism or dedication are available for infants and young children. Once older children can begin to understand who Jesus is, what he did, and how we may participate, it might be wiser to discuss believer baptism with them. Children who are too old for infant baptism and who are still growing in understanding salvation through Christ may also be dedicated.

Pastors are available and ready to discuss your next steps and options.

We pray that God will be at work in all of our hearts and homes!

Praise God for this holy sacrament of baptism!

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