

Eastminster Presbyterian Church
Sacrament of Baptism

In order that all concerned may have a clear understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism and its important place within the church community, the Session of the Eastminster Presbyterian Church has adopted the following guidelines for its participation in and practice of the Sacrament of Baptism.

- I. We recognize that Baptism, as one of the two sacraments of our church, is ordained by Christ, and is the Word made visible. It is a means of testifying to and receiving the reality of God's grace. It is both God's act and the people's response. Baptism is a sign that we are a part of the community of the universal church and is, therefore, an act of the whole church and a sign of entrance into it. Therefore:
 - A. We affirm that there is only one Baptism, whether administered to adults or to children of any age.
 - B. Since Baptism signals our membership in the universal church and since its reality does not depend upon the tradition or form in which it is administered, it shall be administered only once to each person.
 - C. Baptism shall be administered in the presence of the worshipping congregation and since it cannot be separated from the Word, ordinarily it shall be administered at a service in which the written word is expounded, setting forth the promises and benefits the Sacrament proclaims. If in the judgment of the minister and the Session, circumstances of extreme illness or infirmity justify the administration of the Sacrament apart from public worship, the congregation should be represented by at least one member of the Session in addition to the minister, thereby showing the communal nature of Baptism. In such event, the minister shall remind all present that the Sacrament is not administered as an emergency measure to ensure salvation, but is a means of showing forth the redemptive power of the Word of God in Jesus Christ.
- II. We are concerned that large numbers in the church and in our society increasingly view Baptism as a cultural practice, sometimes associating Christianity in the context of an "American Religion." Baptism is not an initiation into citizenship; rather it is initiation into the church, where ultimate loyalty belongs to Christ alone and where life must be shaped by the demands of the Gospel. Therefore:
 - A. The Sacrament of Baptism shall be administered only to those who will be responsibly nurtured through participation in the worship and work of the church.
 - B. In the case of children, only those children with at least one parent or guardian who is a member of a Christian congregation may receive Baptism. The Session may grant permission to Christian parents or guardians who are not members of this congregation to present infants for Baptism, provided they are members in good standing in some other congregation of believers and provided the governing body of that congregation makes a written request to the Session to administer the sacrament in their behalf.
 - C. As a Session we take the responsibility of instructing and discussing with parents or guardians and those adults requesting Baptism, acquainting them with the significance of what God is doing in the act of Baptism and with the responsibility it lays upon them.

D. The Session shall record at the time of Baptism the name of each child or adult.

III. Although Baptism is personal, it is also a communal sacrament, incorporating one into the community of faith. The congregation shares in its celebration by promising to support and nourish those who thus become a part of their community and life together. Therefore:

A. The person to be baptized shall be presented by an elder, making it clear that no one presumes to come to Baptism but is presented by a representative of the community of faith.

Approved by Session November 16, 2015.