



Baptising your Child

Baptising children is one of those issues that people have lot of questions about and often there are misunderstandings. Here is an explanation of what is behind baptising infants at freshchurch...

Congratulations!

The birth of your child is an occasion of great celebration! It is a time of much joy and happiness. And often it's a time when family gets behind the new parents to support them and help them through this demanding but ultimately enriching stage of life. The family of course is parents, sibling etc. But here at Eatons Hill Presbyterian Church, we can also be a family for you that supports and cares for you, and takes a significant role in nurturing your child. In fact the bible speaks of church in terms of 'brothers' and 'sisters' in Christ. In practice, what this means is that we need each other and we are there to encourage each other in our relationship with God and to help one another to spiritually grow.

Baptising Your Child

A great step that can be taken in terms of acknowledging and affirming your baby's belonging to our church family is baptism. It's important to realise, though, water baptism is a sign and symbol. It doesn't magically make a child a Christian. There is some misconception in society on this issue so it's important to be clear on this. Baptism isn't some sort of insurance ticket with God.

So what is Baptism?

The New Testament treats baptism as a visible, an outward sign of a "new deal" with God. When a person made a new start in life by trusting and following Jesus, baptism with water was a sign of washing away the old life, and starting a new life with the inner washing of God's Spirit.

In short, baptism follows *faith and repentance* – which means turning from your old life, asking forgiveness, and committing yourself to serving the Lord Jesus. Usually, in the New Testament, the head of the household made the decision to turn to Jesus on behalf of the family unit. Because of this, baptism was a "family event". Notice these two accounts:

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39)

and,

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. (Acts 16:31-33)

Infant Baptism & the Parents

Obviously – for a baby or a very young infant, they will not have a grasp of Christianity. That will come with time as they are nurtured by their parents with the help of the church. But because of their lack of understanding, much of the focus at the infant baptism service is on your commitment as the child's parents. It will be you that will be asked a series of questions, in which you have the opportunity to publicly state your faith in Jesus Christ, your intention to serve Him as a family, and your intention to raise your child as part of the church family.

Promises, Promises

Here are the baptismal promises of the Presbyterians Church in their traditional form:

A & B, have you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your saviour, and do you seek to serve him faithfully as your Lord?

Yes, we do

Do you bring N to be baptized with the prayer he/she will come to faith in God by trusting Jesus as his/her Saviour and accepting him as his/her own Lord?

Yes, we do

Do you promise to teach N to trust in the Lord Jesus and rely on his death and resurrection for forgiveness and New Life?

Yes, we do

To the church family: Do you as their church family promise to support A & B as they teach N about Jesus; do you promise to set before him/her a faithful example of godliness; and to encourage him/her to put his/her trust in Jesus Christ and to grow in faith and love?

We do

Significantly, the whole church is then asked to promise to take a nurturing and encouraging interest in your child. Because we are asking the church to make a promise, we have the policy of only baptizing infants from families who are part of church or from families who would like to be.

And then come the words:

N – we baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Where to from here?

You will need to think through whether you can make these promises. Intrinsic to responding affirmatively to these questions will be:

- 1) you are a Christian who has a personal faith in Jesus and,
- 2) you are part of our church or would like to be.

If you are not comfortable with the promises, please be open with your thoughts and feelings. Perhaps we can arrange a service that suits exactly what you desire as you celebrate God's blessing in the life of your new child.

Contact

If you're interested in celebrating the arrival of your child at church, feel free to contact Garnet Swann, on 33251527 or garnet@mpc.org.au