

B A P T I S M

The Seekonk Congregational Church is pleased to be a part of the baptism of your child. Since it is one of the most significant events in the life of your child, please reflect with all seriousness on the meaning of baptism as presented in this booklet. If you have any questions at any time, please do not hesitate to talk with the minister.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

It is the consensus of the Board of Deacons that no child will ever be refused baptism in this faith community. However, this attitude of welcoming and hospitality is extended with the understanding that parents will be honest in regard to the vows being made before God and a community of faith to nurture the child in faith--- modeling that truth and integrity by attending church regularly, by actively taking part in the life of the church, by bringing the child to Church School on a regular basis, and by leading the child to Confirmation in the 9th grade. **THESE ARE SOLEMN, SERIOUS, AND SACRED PROMISES TO GOD.** Children can be baptized at any age, and since baptism of an infant or child is based on the parents' promises and commitment, it is far more than tradition or 'something that is done simply because family or friends expect it'.

** Baptism is a holy sacrament of belonging to the Christian community. The minister introduces the child by saying "This is the newest member of the Church of Jesus Christ!" and we believe that we are the hands and feet, the heart and mind of Jesus Christ---seeking to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ in all we do and say.

** God already loves your child. We do not 'give your child to God' but rather we thank God that your child is in the loving care of the Creator, rejoicing because God takes the initiative in coming to us.

** In baptism, children are publicly received by this community of Christians who pledge that they will express God's love to them in concrete ways. This congregation vows to support you and your family in providing the nurturing environment and education to help your growing child know God as revealed in Jesus Christ. They promise to pray for and with your child and your family and to guide, support and encourage parents in their commitment to raise the child in the Christian faith. In this way the child becomes part of the community of Jesus Christ. It does not happen by magic! The love of God becomes known through personal experience in a community of caring.

** Baptism celebrates the unique life of your child as created by God and joins your child to Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

In the Service of Christian Baptism, **WATER** stands for the promise of the gift of God's grace in our lives and being flooded with the new life that is experienced through Jesus Christ.

With the **LAYING ON OF HANDS** by the pastor, there is the symbol of the gift of the Holy Spirit (God actively working in us and through us).

The question "By what **NAME** shall this child be called?" signifies that each person is called by God. The **VOWS OF THE PARENTS AND OF THE CONGREGATION** are their response to God and the acceptance of the responsibility to lead the newly baptized person in the understanding of Christ.

The **HOLDING OF THE CHILD** by the minister symbolizes the tender love of God, and it is a sign of being taken into the love and care of the church.

SERVICES OF BAPTISM

The following are two worship services for the Sacrament of Baptism. Please read each one and choose the one that you prefer.

SERVICE I

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we gather now to celebrate the gift of God's grace in the sacrament of baptism.

There is one body and one spirit, one Lord, one baptism, one God creator of us all.

Let us remember how they were bringing children to Jesus, that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them:

"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the realm of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the realm of God like a child shall not enter it."

And Jesus took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them.

Friends, in the Sacrament of Baptism, we celebrate the grace and forgiveness of God that we know in Jesus Christ. Here we proclaim that all of life is God's gift, and the gift is good. We also thank God for this child, and praise God for the ever new possibilities which lie open to her/him as a child of God. In baptism, we receive this child into the love and care of Christ's church, so that as s/he grows and matures s/he may come to know God and to offer her/his life in God's service in the world.

(Please be seated)

Pastor: *(to the parents)* Is it your desire that this child be baptized into this faith?

Response: It is

Do you promise with God's help, by your life and teaching, to lead this child toward an understanding of the Christian Gospel, and into the service of Jesus Christ?

Response: We do.

Will you endeavor, God being your helper, to guide and instruct this child that s/he may be led to the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world, to the communion of the Lord's table, and to confirmation into responsible membership in Christ's church?

Response: We will.

Pastor: *(to sponsors or Godparents if any)* Yours is a great privilege and a holy responsibility. You have heard the vows taken by these parents. Do you promise, with God's help, to do everything in your power to enable these vows to be fulfilled.

Response: We do.

Deacon: Brothers and sisters in faith, I commend to your love this child whom we now accept as a member of the family of God. Will you endeavor to live so that s/he may grow in the knowledge and love of God, and of our Savior Jesus Christ. Will you support these parents in their efforts to guide this child in the way of the Gospel and to faithful service in Christ's church?

If so please say "We will promise our love and support"

People: We will promise our love and support.

Pastor: O God, giver of life and love, you have promised that you will be not only our God, but also the God of our children. Sanctify with Your Spirit this child, whom we baptize according to Your Word, and bless this water, that it may be the sign and seal of new life in Christ our Saviour. Amen.

By what name shall this child be called? _____, I baptize you in the name of the God who creates your unique and precious life...in the name of the Christ who will reveal to you the journey of love...and in the name of the Holy Spirit who will guide and strengthen you all of your days. Amen.

May God bless you now and forevermore. Amen.

Friends I now present to you the newest member of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Minister walks child down aisle.

Let us pray: O God of our parents, and our God, we give You thanks for the gift of _____, and for receiving him/her into the company of Christ's people. We commend this child to Your care, O God, and ask that You help him/her to confess Christ crucified and risen, and to continue in Your service and his/her days. Bless, O God, all who care for this child, especially her/his parents, that all may keep their vows, and faithfully teach him/her the lessons of our faith. Strengthen this family in the bonds of love; guide them in the way of trust and duty; and let their counsel be wise, that this child might learn from their ways and words to walk with You in fullness of life, through Jesus Christ our Savior, to Whom be the glory forever and ever.

And now may the love of God, our Creator; the grace and peace of Jesus the Christ; and the communion of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you, now and forevermore. Amen.

SERVICE II

Dear Friends, God's love in Jesus Christ reaches to each and every child...and we come now to celebrate the gift of God's grace in the sacrament of Baptism.

This is a holy moment...a time to remember the sacred blessings of life...a time to remind ourselves that we are part of the human family of God.

Today we celebrate the life of _____ and we know that in God's creation there is no other child precisely like _____. S/He possesses special qualities and potentialities and is unique in the sign of God.

Today we remember how Jesus loved the little children and blessed each one. So it is that we rejoice in the beginning of _____ sacred journey that begins in this faith community.

This journey is marked by the promises given by _____ parents (and godparents or sponsors) and by all of the people of this congregation as we seek to show God's love to one another as revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

TO PARENTS:

_____ you have come now to present _____ for baptism. Is it your decision and desire that your child be baptized into the Christian faith? If so, please say "IT IS"

Do you promise with God's help, by your life and teaching, to lead _____ toward an understanding of the Christian faith, and into the service of Jesus Christ, promising that the divine life which God gives _____ is nurtured toward an understanding of that faith?

If so please say "WE DO"

Do you promise to guide and instruct your child that s/he will be led to communion of the Lord's table, and to confirmation into responsible membership in the church? If so, please say "WE DO".

TO GODPARENTS/SPONSORS (if any)

_____, Yours is a great privilege and a holy responsibility. You have heard the sacred promises taken by these parents. Do you promise, with God's help, to do everything in your power to enable these vows to be fulfilled. If so please say, WE DO.

Deacon to Congregation:

Brothers and sisters in faith Will you welcome _____ joyfully as a member of our family of God...and will you support these parents and accept as our sacred responsibility the nurture of this child in order that s/he might grow to full humanity as we see it in Jesus Christ?

If so please say, "WE WILL".

Prayer of the Minister:

Gracious God, giver of all life and lover of all of us, you promise to be our God and the God of our children. Bless now with your Spirit this child, whom we will baptize according to your holy word, and bless this water, that it may be the sign and seal of new life in Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Minister Takes Child

"By what name shall this child be called? _____ I baptize you in the name of the God who creates your unique and precious life...in the name of the Christ who will reveal to you the journey of love...and in the name of the Holy Spirit who will guide and strengthen you all of your days. Amen.

May God bless you now and forevermore. Amen.

Friends, I now present to you the newest member of the Church of Jesus Christ

Minister walks child down aisle...

Prayer:

O God of our parents, and our God, we give you thanks for this gift of ____ and for blessing ____ as sacred in your sight. We thank you for the holy privilege of passing life in faith from one generation into another.

We commend this child to your care, O God, and pray that ____ will be guided by your love to grow in the fullness of life.

Bless all who care for this child, especially these parents. May all keep the sacred vows here promised this day and faithfully teach ____ the lessons of our faith. Strengthen this family in the bonds of love, guide them in the way of trust and duty, and let their counsel be wise, that ____ might learn from their ways and words to journey in the love of Jesus Christ...to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

And now may the love of God, our Creator; the grace and peace of Jesus' the Christ; and the communion of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you, now and forevermore. Amen.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

1. Pictures and Flowers

Flash pictures ARE NOT ALLOWED during the worship service. If you wish to “recreate” any of the baptismal service, please inform the pastor and this can be done following the morning worship. Video is permitted as long as the person taking the film remains seated and uses no extra lighting.

You are responsible to inform any guests attending the worship service that no flash pictures are allowed.

Flowers on the altar or on the pedestals may be given in honor of the baptism for that day. In order to arrange this, please sign up on the board in the hallway to the right of the office window.

If you have questions about this procedure, please speak with the pastor or call the church office (336-9355). Generally, you order the flowers and have them delivered on Saturday. Arrangements need to be made so the church will be open for that delivery.

2. Music

Following the baptism, there is a Song of Baptism which may be sung by the congregation or by a soloist. If you have a special preference, please speak with the minister. In the New Century Hymnal some of the choices are:

- #325 Child of Blessing, Child of Promise
- #327 Jesus Loves Me
- #328 Wonder of Wonders, Here Revealed

Speak with the minister about appropriate songs for a solo or duct.

3. Godparents or Sponsors

In the Congregational tradition, it is not necessary to have sponsors or godparents because the whole community of faith promises to nurture your child in the faith. However, if you wish to have sponsors or godparents, simply let the minister know their first names. They will come forward as parents bring the child forward and they will be asked the question regarding their promise to do everything in their power to see that the parents fulfill their vows before God.

4. Honorarium For The Church

If you wish to present an offering in honor of your child’s baptism, you are free to do so. Since most parents are already pledging to the support of the church, the offering is optional.

5. Seating Arrangements

Parents and (Sponsors/Godparents, if any) sit in the front row on the left side of the church facing the altar. Relatives and friends are invited to identify themselves to the ushers and sit on either side of the aisle in the front section. If child(ren) becomes too disruptive, please go to the soundproof rooms at the rear of the sanctuary where the service can still be seen and heard.

6. Other Considerations

Following the actual service of baptism, the minister will walk down the aisle with the child as a symbol of introducing the congregation to the child and the child to the congregation.

After then final prayer and blessing, parents will sign the Book of Life at the direction of that morning’s deacon who will then present you with the child’s certificate of baptism. The minister will also present you with a special baptismal cup which has the child’s name and date of baptism. This cup may be kept for the child and used on other important days of life’s journey.

On the day of Baptism, the child’s name is placed on the Cradle Roll of the church with the expectation that as your child grows, he or she will be enrolled into the Church School and be an active part of the faith community as promised by the parents on this special day.

Church Etiquette for Baptisms

It is often difficult for those attending the baptism in our church to know the acceptable way of worshipping. Here are some tips that we ask you to share with your family and friends.

- 1) **Parents and Godparents sit in 2nd row on the 'choir' side** – Have godparents sit on the aisle and parents with child sit in center (so if baby cries in service after the baptism is completed, you can easily slip out of the pew and take the child out the side entryway. And if the baby becomes quiet or sleeps, you can slip back into the same pew on the outside. **Please do not walk in front of the congregation or down the center aisle once the service has begun.**
- 2) Please **advise any friends or family members coming with young children** to sit near the back and if the baby/toddler/child is not able to be quiet, take them to one of the crying rooms in the back of the church.
- 3) It is easy to hear crying/ running/ talking in the room behind the sanctuary so please advise anyone who goes there to keep noise to a minimum.
- 4) Encourage each family member to use the **Bulletins** (Orders of Service which are provided to each worshipper) and to follow along with the prayers and hymns.
- 5) If the service is one where **communion** is served, please clarify that **ALL are welcome** and invited to come forward, take bread, dip it into the cup and receive.
- 6) Please remember to inform family and friends that **no flash pictures** are allowed in worship and video may be taken only from a seated position in the pew.

It is essential for the deacons to share this information as some families not familiar with our tradition for worship see the service as ONLY the baptism – and while every child is to be celebrated ... talking, moving about, disregard for the hour of worship can be very distracting for those who have come to sense God's presence in hymns, prayers, sermon, and others aspects of the total worship experience.

We seek to be an open and welcoming congregation and hope that those who come to worship with us will sense the hospitality and holiness of this faith community.