

SESSION 2: A COMMON COMMITMENT

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES ABOUT THE SACRAMENTS

Sacraments are visible signs, symbolic of the acts of God--the cleansing power of God in Baptism and the body and blood of Jesus Christ in Communion.

Although life and many of its experiences have a sacramental quality to them, Presbyterians observe only two sacraments: Baptism and Communion. This is because these are the two instituted by Christ while on earth.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

The Westminster Confession of Faith states: *Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace. They were instituted by God along with that covenant to represent Christ and His benefits, to confirm our position with and in Him, to demonstrate a visible difference between those who belong to the church and the rest of the world, and solemnly to engage believers in the service of God in Christ according to His word. (reference)*

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Through baptism, a person publicly proclaims faith in Christ and becomes a part of a group of believers or the "Body of Christ." Baptism is a sign and seal of covenant of grace. It symbolizes our connection to Jesus Christ through:

1. Being in-grafted into Christ
2. Rebirth
3. Remission of sins

4. Believers' yielding to God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life.

Baptism is also administered to the infants of one or both believing parents. In the case of infants, the parent(s) is required:

1. To renew their commitment to follow Christ.
2. To covenant before God and the church that they will:
 - Train their children in the Christian faith
 - Pray with and for them
 - Set before them a Godly example
 - Encourage them in every way to become Christians when they reach an age of understanding.

Presbyterians do not believe that immersion is required, but that pouring or sprinkling water upon the person is sufficient. Immersion is not forbidden. The form is not considered the essential thing in baptism, but the inner and spiritual meaning. What is promised by parents of children and what is experienced by youth or adults in the cleansing power of God's Spirit, is considered essential to the spiritual growth of believers in baptism.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Communion is also called "The Lord's Supper." It is designed to renew the faith and the life of the participants and to send them forth strengthened for the duties and the privileges of Christian service. Presbyterians recognize that this is the Lord's table and invite all other professing Christians to partake with them.

The Scripture tells us we should prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacrament:

1. Self-Examination - 1 Corinthians 11:27-28
2. Confessing My Sins - 1 John 1:9
3. Recommitment - Romans 12:1
4. Restoring Relationships - Matthew 5:23-24

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:27-28

St. Johns celebrates Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month at the 9:00 am service and at the 11:00 am service. In addition, Communion is also celebrated at the Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunrise services, as well as any other occasion authorized by the Session.