

On Baptism

Blessing and Baptism

At Trinity we affirm and practice a dual approach to the baptism and blessing of small children. Our normative practice is what is known as “credo-baptism.” According to this view, once a person of reasonable age makes a profession of faith he or she then receives theological instruction and is baptized. These baptisms occur annually at Trinity during the Easter season for adults as well as youth and children. Parents of small children who ascribe to this approach are often desirous of having their child blessed and welcomed into the church in anticipation of that child’s future baptism. Therefore, just as Jesus laid his hands on small children to bless and affirm them (Mark 10:16), we in like manner bless and welcome small children at Trinity.

In keeping with what has been the normative practice of the global church, we also gladly affirm a form of baptism known as “paedo” or infant baptism. This means that we administer the sacrament of baptism to small children of committed Christian parents. Since the earliest days of our faith, the baptism of small children has been administered in lieu of circumcision as a sign of God’s prevenient and covenantal faithfulness. At Trinity, we have a combined service for small children (0-1st grade) who are being both baptized and blessed. This service, which intends to honor the work of families and the church in exhorting small children toward maturity in Christian faith, is also held during the Easter season at Trinity.

Though it is indeed sacramental, baptism is not, according to Scripture, salvific for persons of any age (Romans 10:9-10). This means that parents who wish to have their small child baptized are encouraged to exhort that child toward a personal and public profession of faith and are, therefore, required to attend a four-week Exploring Baptism class. Adults and youth who received the sacrament as small children and now desire to make a public profession of faith are also expected to attend the class. Our annual baptism service, therefore, includes Baptisms and Affirmations of Faith for adults, youth and children (2nd grade and up).

Re-Baptism

While baptism is not salvific (meaning it does not produce salvation), it does signify the work of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of the Church *for* salvation. This prevenient grace does not require participation or consent though it must be received and a profession of faith must be made. Those who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus are expected to profess and publicly affirm their faith, but need not be re-baptized. This profession is in fact an affirmation of the baptism they first received and evidence of the work of God in their life to bring them to salvation.

It is our conviction that this approach to baptism is most consistent with our “three streams” approach to worship, and gives honor to the diversity of traditions and backgrounds represented within our community. For further study, we recommend the following resources:

Online

<http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2007/07/bridge-over-troubled-waters-rethinking.html>

http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Believing_Belonging.htm

Books

Howe, John W., and Samuel C. Pascoe. "Chapter 6/ A Sacramental Church." *Our Anglican Heritage: Can an Ancient Church Be a Church of the Future?* Eugene, Or.: Cascade, 2010.