If you or your children would like to be baptized, please visit **baptism.mdpc.org** and fill out the Baptism Inquiry, or contact Pastor Dan Aikins at **daikins@mdpc.org** or 713.490.9292.

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The Sacraments of Baptism and Communion

We believe that God is at work in and through the sacraments of baptism and communion. In baptism, we celebrate God's saving initiative that brings His people to faith in Jesus, but baptism is not merely a celebration. In communion, also called the Lord's Supper, we remember Jesus—His life, ministry, death, and resurrection—but communion is not merely a remembrance. God is at work through Christ and by the power of the Spirit when we practice these sacraments. Inside are helpful "Key Points" that help us understand what the sacraments are and how we practice them as Presbyterians.

Communion (The Lord's Supper)

- Communion "is a celebration of the presence of God in our midst; bringing us into communion with God and with one another; feeding and nourishing our souls. It also anticipates the day when we will eat and drink with Christ in His Father's kingdom" (New City Catechism, Q46).
- Believers are nourished and fed to live as Jesus' disciples. John Calvin described communion as drawing believers up to God's presence by the Holy Spirit to participate in His nature.
- The power of communion is not "in" or "with" the bread and wine but through God's presence by the Holy Spirit. The bread and wine remain merely bread and wine.
- We use "ordinary" bread—bread common to our culture and not "holy" or "blessed." The bread may be leavened, but unleavened bread may be used to draw on communion's connection with Passover.
- Children may take communion when their parents have determined that they have faith in Jesus, and a growing understanding of communion and what it means to participate in it. MDPC offers an afternoon retreat to help parents and their children prepare for communion.
- Communion is one of the ways in which believers "remember" their baptism and reflect on God's grace in their lives since they were baptized.
- Communion is a communal and public event, celebrated in connection with a worship service and the preaching of God's Word.
- Ordained pastors administer the words of institution for the sake of clarity regarding the nature of the sacrament. Pastors, church officers, and trained church members may serve communion.
- We may celebrate communion as often as we would like as a congregation. At MDPC, we take communion at least quarterly.
- The Words of Institution that pastors repeat in preparation for communion are found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Baptism

- "Baptism is the washing with water in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; it signifies and seals our adoption into Christ, our cleansing from sin, and our commitment to belong to the Lord and to His church" (New City Catechism, Q44).
- Baptism replaces the Old Testament practice of circumcision while retaining the significance of covenant promises made between God and His people. Whereas circumcision marked a family as God's own through the male family members, baptism is for all of Jesus' disciples and their children, both male and female.
- Baptism is primarily a family affair.
  - In baptism, the Father adopts us into God's family, the Church, through Christ by the Spirit.
  - The local church (MDPC) represents the whole Church and takes on the responsibility, alongside the parents, for the spiritual growth of the child. For Presbyterians, the congregation takes the role of godparents in other traditions.
  - Baptisms are not private but a public act of worship during a service with covenant partners (church members) and officers (pastors, elders, deacons) of the church present.
- Baptism includes a public profession of faith in Jesus for those being baptized or for their parents on their behalf.
- We observe both baptism of believers, and baptism of the infants of believing parents.
- We observe baptism through sprinkling or immersion. Baptism is effective not because of the amount of water used, but because of the power of God behind the water.
- Individuals are baptized only once. God is at work in and through our baptism regardless of our memory of the baptism, our level of understanding of the baptism, or who performed the baptism.
- We should "remember" our baptism every time we celebrate another person's baptism, receive communion, take vows as covenant partners or officers, and in other times of personal and public worship. "Remembering" our baptism involves thanking God for all the ways God has worked in our lives since our baptism and asking God to continue growing us in Christ.
- We use regular water for baptism—water that is easily accessible and is not "holy" or "blessed."
- Ordained pastors are to administer baptism for the sake of clarity regarding the nature of the sacrament. Officers may assist the pastors with baptism, such as holding the bowl.