



what we believe

by Pastor Skip

Only about 25% our members here at MPC are life-long Presbyterians; most of you have come from other denominations, often more than one. We've got folks who were Southern Baptists, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, and

Different denominations have developed different practices over the centuries

Episcopalians, among others. The various denominations have a great deal in common, but still

we all approach our theology and faith practices in different ways. Jesus left no instruction manual for how we should do things in the church, so it is not at all surprising that different denominations have developed different practices over the centuries.

Here in the Presbyterian Church, we are grounded in Reformed Theology: practices that came out of the Reformation begun by Martin Luther and John Calvin in the early years of the 16th century, as Reformers protested what they believed was a church institution that had strayed far from what Jesus had taught. The first step for the Reformers was to ask, "is the practice as we do it, whatever it might be, grounded in the Bible?"

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Following that line of reasoning, Reformers argued we should have only two Sacraments:

Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They could find no biblical support for making other practices sacramental, including marriage. That doesn't mean they are not important; it just means they are not sacramental.

But even if we agree that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacramental, various denominations differ on the meaning of each. Baptism, for us, for example, is not about salvation, as it is in some other denominations. A baby need not be baptized in order to assure the child's admission to heaven. In the Presbyterian Church, we look at baptism as "the sign and seal of incorporation into Christ. In baptism we participate in Jesus' death and resurrection. In baptism, we die to what separates us from God and are raised to newness of life in Christ. Baptism is the sign and symbol of inclusion in God's grace and covenant with the church. Baptism signifies the beginning of life in Christ." (from our *Book of Order*).

Baptism, for us, is not about salvation

clear through the call of the Holy Spirit when the "right" time is.

We'll explore baptism in more detail next month. In the months to follow, I will touch on other aspects of our theology and our practices—what we do and why we do them—as we live out our faith within the Presbyterian Church. Your questions are most welcome!