

**Members - Types, Adding, Removing
(with Special Emphasis on Baptism)
2020 Session Clerk Workshop**

There is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (Eph. 4:5–6).

The Presbyterian Church (USA) recognizes all baptisms with water in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit administered by other Christian churches.

Membership and Baptism

In Jesus Christ, God calls people to faith and to membership in the Church, the body of Christ. Baptism is the visible sign of that call and claim on a human life and of entrance into the membership of the church. (G-1.0301)

Theology of Baptism

See W-3.0402 of the Book of Order.

Entry into Membership - Persons enter into active church membership in the following ways:

1-Public profession of faith, made after careful examination by the session in the meaning and responsibilities of membership; if not already baptized, the person making profession of faith shall be baptized;

2-Certificate of transfer, when a person is a member of another Christian church at the time of transfer;

3-Reaffirmation of faith, for persons previously baptized in the name of the triune God and having publicly professed their faith. (G-1.0303)

After they are examined and received by the session, new members are presented in worship. As part of their public welcome, it is appropriate for those previously baptized to reaffirm the commitments made in baptism, profess their faith in Jesus Christ, and declare their intent to participate actively and responsibly in the worship, life, governance, and mission of the church. On such occasions, it is fitting for all worshipers to reaffirm the baptismal covenant. (W-4.0204)

Types of Members

Baptized Member - A baptized member is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in this congregation or elsewhere, and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Such baptized members receive the pastoral care and instruction of the church, and may participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. (G-1.0401) [Note: it is no longer required that an individual be baptized to participate in the Lord's Supper in the PC(USA).]

Active Member - An active member is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church, and participates in the church's work and worship. Active members participate in governance (e.g., voting) and may be elected to ordered ministry (see G-2.0102). Active members shall regularly, after prayerful consideration, recommit themselves to the disciplines and responsibilities of membership outlined in G-1.0304. The session is responsible for preparing those who would become active members of the congregation. (G-1.0402)

Affiliate Member - An affiliate member is a member of another congregation of this denomination or of another denomination or Christian body, who has temporarily moved from the community where the congregation of membership is situated, has presented a certificate of good standing from the appropriate council or governing body of that congregation, and has been received by the session as an affiliate member. An affiliate member may participate in the life of the congregation in the same manner as an active member except that an affiliate member may not vote in congregational meetings or be elected to ordered ministry or other office in the congregation. (G-1.0403)

Membership Roll - Adding and Removing

There shall be rolls of baptized, active, and affiliate members.... The session shall delete names from the roll of the congregation upon the member's death, admission to membership in another congregation or presbytery, or renunciation of jurisdiction. The session may delete names from the roll of the congregation when a member so requests, or has moved or otherwise ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. The session shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity.

Registers

The session clerk is responsible to keep a register of baptisms authorized by the session, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such other registers as the session may deem necessary.

Responsibility for Baptism

Baptism shall be authorized by the session and administered by a minister of the Word and Sacrament. The session's responsibilities for baptism include: encouraging parents (or those exercising parental responsibility) to present their children for baptism without undue haste or undue delay; encouraging new believers to be baptized; examining candidates for baptism, or their parents, and instructing them in the significance of the sacrament; enrolling those who are baptized as members of the congregation; and providing for their ongoing nurture and formation for baptismal life in the world.

The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the universal Church, is responsible for nurturing baptized persons in Christian life. The session may designate certain members of the congregation as sponsors or mentors for those who are baptized or for their parents.

When a young child is presented for baptism at least one parent (or person exercising parental responsibility) should be an active member of a Christian church, normally the congregation in which the baptism takes place. The session may consider a request to baptize a child whose parent is an active member of another church. If the session approves such a request, it should communicate with the council of the other congregation and notify them when the Sacrament has been administered. Those presenting children for baptism will promise to nurture and guide them until they are ready to make a personal profession of faith and assume the responsibility of active church membership.

A council may authorize a baptism, to be administered by a minister of the Word and Sacrament, in certain situations beyond the congregational setting, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, military bases, or other ministry settings. In these cases, the minister of the Word and Sacrament is responsible for ensuring that the name of the newly baptized person is placed on the appropriate roll of a council (G-3.02, G-3.03). (W-3.0403)