

Baptism at Covenant Christian Community Church

What is Baptism?

Baptism is the act through which someone identifies with the church, the body of Christ. Almost every branch of the Christian church practices some form of water baptism.

Why is Baptism Important?

1. Jesus called us to water baptism as a part of being his disciple. It is an act of obedience.

Jesus said, "Go, then, 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. (Matthew 28:18-20)

2. Baptism symbolizes our new life through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4)

We must recognize that baptism is not what gives us that new life! Life and salvation only comes through Jesus Christ and our faith in him. Baptism is an outward demonstration of our complete surrender to and trust in Jesus as ruler of our life.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

3. Baptism is the symbol of our covenant relationship with God. The Bible is the story of God in covenant relationship with his people. Every time God makes a covenant with people a symbol is used to mark that covenant. A rainbow became the symbol of his covenant with Noah. (Genesis 9:12-17) Circumcision became the symbol of his covenant with Abraham. (Genesis 17:11) Sabbath was added as a symbol of his covenant with Israel. (Exodus 31:13-14)

Baptism replaces circumcision as the new covenant symbol between God and his new covenant people. Just as circumcision physically marked out who was a part of the people of God in the old covenant, so baptism was established to publicly mark out those who are a part of the people of God, through Christ, in the new covenant.

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. ... when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12)

Why be baptized by immersion?

1. Because Jesus Christ was baptized that way.

"As soon as Jesus was baptized He went up out of the water." Matthew 3:16

2. The Greek word 'baptize' most often means "to dip under; to immerse."
3. Every baptism in the Bible was by immersion.

"They went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water..." (Acts 8:38-39)

4. It best symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. (Romans 6:4)

Who should be baptized?

Every person who is a follower of Jesus.

"Those who accepted His message were baptized." (Acts 2:41)

"Simon himself believed and was baptized." (Acts 8:13)

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News... and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12)

At Covenant we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the meaning of baptism before we baptize them. Some churches practice baptism for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make their own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed. This is different from the baptism demonstrated in the Bible which was went along with an individuals confession of personal faith.

Baptism as an infant can be a significant experience for families and can be something adult believers value significantly. To be baptized again as an believer does not need to demean the role of the infant baptism in the spiritual journey of an individual, nor does having been baptized as an infant need to prevent a believer from participating in the marker of faith that Jesus invites us into.

When should I be baptized?

As soon as you have believed!

"Those who believed...were baptized...that day." (Acts 2:41)

"Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, 'Look, here is water! Why shouldn't I be baptized right now?' Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The man answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him." (Acts 8:35-38)

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to follow Jesus with your life, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are 'perfect,' you'll never feel 'good enough!' Children though are encouraged to wait until they understand the decision they are making.

What happens when I'm baptized?

Covenant has a large tank for baptism hidden under a portion of the stage. When someone wants to be baptized it is filled and the water is heated. We would typically do the baptism as a portion of one of our Sunday morning services. The individual being baptized would make their way into the tank (wearing a bathing suit - or something else they are okay getting wet - and a t-shirt) and would share their commitment to following Jesus. The person doing the baptizing (most often the pastor, but it can be someone else) would then immerse the person under the water.

Be In Christ Church of Canada tradition is to have the individual kneel and then be immersed forward three times moving them forward under the water each time. The reason we do it forward is to symbolize our willing submission to the lordship of Jesus. The reason we do it three times is to symbolize the triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Do I have to say anything when I'm baptized?

Apart from saying yes to a simple question, "Have you personally placed your trust in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness for your sins?" you are not required to say anything. However, we do encourage people to share a testimony of their faith with those those who are witnessing your baptism. A suggestion for your personal testimony could include: 1) What your life was like before you accepted Christ; 2) How and when you accepted Christ; and 3) What your life is like now since you have accepted Christ. You may want to include a favourite scripture verse as well. If you want your testimony to be recorded on video instead of speaking in front of the congregation, that could be arranged.

Do I have to be baptized at the church building?

Nope! Historically baptisms were *never* done in a church building. That's a fairly modern convenience. Baptisms are supposed to be public and involve the church community, but beyond that the location is secondary. In this area, we have the privilege of being close to a lot of water we could use for a baptism and Covenant has had baptisms in the Penetang Bay before.