

For Those Considering Baptism

What is Baptism?

Baptism is one of two sacraments instituted by Jesus (the other is communion). These sacraments are outward actions that have rich spiritual meaning for the Christian community and are an important part of our worship together. Specifically, baptism is the sacrament which publicly identifies a person as a Christian -- one who has trusted Christ for salvation.

Baptism is rich in meaning, and the Bible teaches us the following aspects of it:

- In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commands his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Baptism is thus the means by which someone is identified as a follower of Christ.
- In passages such as Acts 2:42, 8:12, and 10:47-48, it is evident that baptism follows an individual’s decision to become a follower of Christ’s. So baptism doesn’t provide salvation for an individual (salvation comes only through our faith in Christ), but rather publicly identifies an individual with Christ.
- I Corinthians 12:13 teaches us that baptism is the act through which we formally become members of the body of Christ.
- Romans 6:1-11 shows us that the immersion mode of baptism identifies us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It thus represents our death to self and sin, and our resurrection to new life in Him.
- Acts 22:16 shows us that the water of baptism represents for us the washing away of our sins, the cleansing of our hearts and lives before God.

Baptism is sometimes compared to the wedding rings that a husband and wife wear. While the analogy isn’t a perfect one, it does communicate this important truth. Wedding rings don’t make a couple into husband and wife, but they do testify to the world that they are husband and wife. Similarly, baptism doesn’t make you a Christian, but it is the act through which you proclaim to the world that you are a follower of Christ’s.

Who Should Be Baptized?

Baptism is for believers, those who have committed their lives to Christ. If you have come to the point in your spiritual journey where you have realized that your sin separated you from a Holy God, given up all efforts to reach God through your own good works or religious activity, concluded that Jesus Christ’s death on the cross for your sins is the only thing that can bridge the gap between you and God, and have accepted his gift of salvation for you and committed your life to following him, then baptism is for you. Just as the bride and groom tell of their love through the symbol of rings, you should also want to show the world through baptism of your union with Christ.

Why Should I Be Baptized?

Two primary reasons. First, out of obedience to Jesus. Jesus has commanded his followers to be baptized, and as followers of his we have given up the right to exclude ourselves from his commandments. Second, in order to publicly profess your faith in Christ. This public profession is an important spiritual landmark for you, it is an encouragement to other Christians, and it can be a witness to those in your life who do not know Christ. In fact, we encourage you to be very intentional about inviting friends and family to the baptism celebration. It’s a powerful way to witness to them.

Frequently Asked Questions:

If I was baptized in another church, do I need to be baptized again?

No. As long as your baptism was a Christian baptism, you do not need to be baptized again.

I was baptized as an infant; should I be baptized again?

If you were baptized as a baby, it was a decision made by your parents, testifying to their belief that God's grace was at work in your life. When you make a deliberate decision to follow Christ, the decision to obey Him through baptism is a statement of YOUR faith, and we encourage you to be baptized at that time.

Does baptism have to be by immersion?

While The Wesleyan Church respects those denominations that believe this to be the case, we do not think the New Testament legislates any particular mode of baptism. The value of the sacrament of baptism is in the life and heart of the believer and in the grace of God, not in the amount of water used. As a result, we affirm baptism that is done by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

What about infant baptism?

The Wesleyan Church does allow for infant baptism as an expression of the grace of God that is already at work in the heart of that child. We also allow for the dedication of children, through which God's blessing is formally sought for the child and the parents publicly commit themselves to raise their child in accordance with the Scriptures. We do allow those who have been baptized as infants to be baptized again as adults as a profession of their personal commitment to Christ.

Will I have to say anything?

Yes. Since baptism is intended to be a person's public profession of faith in Christ, we require those who are being baptized to make a verbal statement of their faith in Christ and intention to follow Him. The statement can be brief, but it must be made. We will videotape you the week before the services and then play it right before you are baptized. That should give you a little more peace of mind because you won't have to speak in front of a large crowd, and you can try it a couple of times until you are satisfied with what you have said. The whole taping experience should last about 5-10 minutes, which includes several takes.

How does the service work?

Each person being baptized will be invited into the water. You will then have the opportunity to share your testimony and introduce your sponsor, following which you will be baptized by a pastor with the help of your sponsor. For modesty purposes, both men and women are encouraged to wear dark colored T-shirts over their swimming suits. You may also want to bring a towel and change of clothes.

What do I do next?

Fill out the attached baptism registration form and return it to Melody Burri, or the church office by Sunday, July 27th.