

Candidates for Baptism

Congratulations New Convert!!!!

You have made the most important decision of your life. By accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have accepted his gift of eternal life.

In the complete plan of salvation, water baptism must follow your new Spiritual re-birth. It is an integral part in God's commandments to every believer. Though symbolic, it's essential.

We have put together a more detail explanation below to answer any questions that you may have.

Again, congratulations and may the peace of God continue to rule and abide in your life.

Your Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Richard Leaphart

Is baptism essential to the Christian life? Should people be rebaptized if they change churches or denominations? Is it essential to be baptized in a specific way, such as sprinkling, pouring or immersion?

We can begin to answer such questions by asking: What is the example of the New Testament for those who accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? The answer is that they were baptized.

On the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, when the Holy Spirit was given, Peter stood and exhorted his listeners: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

We are among those who are "far off," and we can share in the grace of God along with those who heard Peter speak almost 2,000 years ago. Note how the people responded to Peter's call after he finished his sermon: About 3,000 accepted Christ that day, and were baptized (Acts 2:41). Baptism became a public testimony that these people had accepted Jesus as the Christ.

Baptism is a public statement that we have committed our lives to God, a statement expressed in symbolic action as a message to ourselves, to others, and to God. By being baptized, we acknowledge that God is the source of our life and the reason we exist, and that Christ is our Lord and Savior.

Baptism pictures the drama of our "I do" decision for Jesus Christ and all that he is in the plan of salvation. It is a symbolic act that says we have made a life-long commitment to Christ, believing that he is our Savior. Baptism is our public statement that we will follow him wherever he may lead us. Those who request baptism are saying they want to be associated with Jesus Christ in a personal and intimate way – to belong to Christ, to share in the benefits of his life and death. That's what it means to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ."

Believers share in the life of Christ. As Christ died, so do the believers. As they share in Jesus' death, they also have a part in his resurrection and eternal life. In baptism, believers dramatize their acceptance of God's gracious offer of salvation, and they promise to do what he wants. The apostle Paul explained this to the Romans:

All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. 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. If we have been united with him like this in death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (Romans 6:3-4)

Baptism symbolizes our decision to accept what it means to be united with Jesus. Going down into the water pictures the death of the self, and the rising up out of the water pictures the resurrection of the self to a new life now, and eternal life in the future.

Of course, baptism is not magic. The act of baptism does not mechanically bring the Holy Spirit to us, nor does it cause our spiritual renewal and salvation. Baptism is a ritual, a metaphor that symbolizes that we have died to our former life and have been reborn to a new life in Christ.

To keep us from thinking about baptism in a magical way, we can examine some examples in Scripture. First, an example where the Holy Spirit did not come immediately to individuals who had been baptized. We read about this in Acts 8:14-17. Many people in Samaria had believed the gospel and accepted Jesus as Savior. They had also been baptized, but they had not received the Spirit in any noticeable way. In this case, Peter and John had to place their hands on these individuals and pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

In the case of the centurion Cornelius and his family and friends, the Holy Spirit came *before* baptism (Acts 10:44-48). They were baptized after receiving the Spirit, but there was no laying on of hands. Both these examples teach us that while baptism is an important public statement of our intentions toward God and Christ, it is symbolic. (The repentant "thief on the cross" could not be baptized at all, yet was saved.)

We follow what appears to be the biblical example of baptism by full immersion. Our church also uses the formula of Matthew 28:19, baptizing candidates into the Trinitarian fellowship of God. The minister will conclude the baptism prayer with words to the candidate such as the following: "Having repented of your sins, and having accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I now baptize you – not into any denomination or church – but into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

When individuals who were once baptized in another church enter our fellowship, they sometimes wonder if they should be rebaptized. If they feel they understood what baptism symbolized when originally baptized, and they had committed to Jesus Christ with understanding and faith, then there is no need to be rebaptized. (The mode of their previous baptism would not be an issue.) Naturally, if the person feels that understanding was previously lacking, then he or she certainly can be baptized again. Individuals can counsel with a pastor if they have any questions about baptism.

What to wear for baptism? Please wear white bottoms and white tops or dresses. You will be immersed/submerged into water; therefore, we ask that you wear dark clothing underneath, such as black t-shirts, leggings or tights, because your clothes will be sticking to you...

Preparation Items to Bring
Shower Cap
Towel
Flip Flops
Change of Clothing
Hair Essentials

Proper Procedures – Complete the attached form and give to Sis. Monica Dorsey, New Hope Administrator, for more information, please feel free to call New Hope @ 404-212-9130.

Candidates for Baptism

DATE: _____

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

Your confession:

Are you a born again believer (saved)? Yes No

Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Yes No

If no, do you understand what Baptism in the Holy Spirit is? Yes No

Did you read and understand the expository given to you entitled "Candidates for Baptism"? Yes No

By signing below you are agreeing that you have been made aware of what it means to be baptized, qualification for baptism and by your confession is now ready to be baptized.

Signature

Date