

Baptism



The Holy Seed Church





BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

Baptism is a symbol of death to the old life and the beginning of a new life in Jesus. It demonstrates a person's desire to become a member of God's family. It shows a willingness to receive the Holy Spirit and to use His gifts in a ministry to others.

{a} Elders and baptism

Church elders play a significant part in a baptismal service. Often elders have visited, encouraged, and given Bible studies to the candidates and prepared them for baptism. On the day of baptism, elders often play a large part in organizing, directing, and giving support throughout the service. In fact, elders themselves perform baptisms under certain conditions. The church fundamental beliefs says, "In the absence of an ordained pastor, the elder shall request the president of the conference or local field to arrange for the administration of the rite of baptism to those desiring to unite with the church." The president may respond by arranging for ordained fundamental beliefs to perform the rite or by giving permission to the elder.

{b} Place of baptism

Baptisms may be held indoors or outdoors, in a church baptistery or in a river, lake, or ocean. On some occasions baptisms have been held in water tanks, baths, swimming pools, and even barrels or bathtubs. Sufficient water to immerse a person and the ceremony may be conducted with decency, in good taste and decorum, then that place is appropriate.

{c} Preparation for baptism

The time and place of baptism ought to be announced and advertised. Those persons involved in the ceremony should be aware of their duties and

coached in their responsibilities. Deacons and deaconesses will need to have the place of baptism prepared.

{d} Dressing for baptism

Advise candidates on suitable clothing to wear. In some places, the church has a supply of baptismal gowns and candidates need to bring only a change of underclothing. Beware of clothing floating up while entering the water or clinging to the body while leaving the water. Gowns should have weights sewn into the hem. Dark colors are least revealing when wet. If gowns are not available, candidates should be instructed to bring clothing that will not show transparent when wet. They will need to bring a towel and a change of clothing. Everything should be carefully planned beforehand so that during the baptism a quiet dignity and propriety is maintained, and no one may be embarrassed or offended. If an outdoor baptism is planned, a secure place for changing clothes should be arranged. When a candidate is elderly, sick, physically handicapped, or exceptionally large an elder or deacon should provide assistance during the baptism.

{e} Acceptance at baptism

Because the baptism will have great personal meaning for candidates, many of the remarks made during the service should be directed specifically to them. If a sermon or short talk is to be given at the service, the topic should center around practical suggestions that will help candidates lead successful Christian lives. Assure them that they are joining a family where there will be many supporting brothers and sisters. Challenge members to show love and acceptance of these new members.

{f} At some time candidates should be officially welcomed into the church family

This acceptance into membership may come before the baptism or immediately after. In either case, candidates are usually asked to stand before the people with the pastor or elders and the members indicate their acceptance and support by vote. The leaders of the church will then speak words of welcome on behalf of the congregation and, with a handshake or in some other culture manner, receive them into fellowship. In some churches the friends of the candidates and members of their families take a place at the front of the congregation near to those who are to be baptized.

Candidates are often assigned a mature Christian from among the membership of the church who will become their spiritual guardian. Each of these individuals stands before the congregation as an indication of their love for and acceptance of the candidate and of their desire to support them in their choice to follow Christ.

{g} Performing the baptism

Candidates are brought to the officiating pastor or elder by a deacon or deaconess. Before baptizing them it may be appropriate to speak a few words about the manner in which they came to accept Jesus. In some cases

they may wish to give a short testimony. A common method for immersing candidates is for them to take a firm grip on your left wrist with both of their hands. You will then lift your right hand and say a few words such as, "My dear Sister/Brother, because of your love for Jesus, and because it is your wish to your life to Him and His church, I now gladly baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the holy Spirit. Amen."

{h} At this point you will place your right or left hand

(whichever is most comfortable for you) behind the shoulders of candidates and gently lower them backwards into the water. Some baptizer either provide or recommend that each candidate bring a handkerchief or a cloth to prevent water from entering the candidate's nose and mouth while being baptized.

This can be held in your other hand and placed over the face just before the candidate goes under the water, then used to wipe the face after. A deacon or deaconess should assist candidates from the water, covering them to prevent their becoming cold and to preserve modesty. They should be led to a secure place where they may change into dry clothing.

{I} Dangers at baptism

If the baptism is to take place in a flowing river or in the ocean, baptize candidates with their heads up stream, or in the direction from which the waves are coming. In this way, the water will not pull candidates away from you, but rather will assist in carrying the weight, and water will not be forced into a candidate's nose or mouth. Be careful not to step too deeply into fast flowing rivers or go too far out in the ocean when waves are large. Be aware that some people have a fear of water. Settle their fears by speaking calmly with them. Never take hold of a microphone while in the water. The resulting shock can be fatal.

{j} Welcome after baptism

Following the baptism of the last candidate, it is good to make an appeal to those observing to make a recommitment of their lives to Jesus. Invite nonmembers to prepare for baptism. The appeal may be followed by a prayer of commitment. Different customs are followed for welcoming newly baptized members. Some congregations will stand in a circle, hold hands, and sing together.

Flowers, small gifts, or cards are sometimes given. Hugs and handshakes are exchanged. In some place the members meet in a celebration meal, giving the seats of honor to the newly baptized. Whatever custom is followed, it is important that these new members become bonded into the church community and made to feel accepted and loved by the congregation.