

JICC: POSITION PAPER
Baptism - Frequently Asked Questions

How often do you schedule baptisms?

We schedule baptisms throughout the year as needed and can generally schedule them during any Sunday gathering. We also hold an annual beach baptism (usually in August). Your baptism journey can begin by completing the sign up form on our website.

Who should be a part of the baptism? Who is authorized to baptize?

Baptism is a church ordinance. Therefore, leadership should be present in some form — either elders or delegated leadership. Others such as parents, homegroup leaders, and friends can assist in leading the baptism. The details of who is leading various aspects of the baptism (such as asking the profession of faith questions or physically doing the immersing) can vary and be coordinated ahead of time by church leadership.

Can parents baptize their children or a spouse baptize their partner?

Yes. But practically, it is important to have church representation, both in the form of church leadership and the wider church family. One of the ways we do this is by an elder or church leader asking the person being baptized about their profession of faith. This ensures that what is being conveyed is not an individual and insulated family moment, but instead the church's affirmation of the individual's profession of faith in Christ.

How do I know if my child is ready to be baptized?

There is a natural tension that we live in as we discern how to answer this question. On one hand, baptism is meant to be for all who have put their faith in Christ. The prerequisite for this is faith and not maturity. This is true for a new believer at any age, thus we do not want to create extra Biblical requirements in order for the new believer to be obedient to Jesus in being baptized.

And on the other hand, we understand that children can easily be motivated by other factors such as desiring to please their parents, desiring to be like their siblings or friends, or just simply wanting to do what would bring them praise from their community.

With this in mind, one of the key elements for parents to look for is conviction of sin and personal repentance as these are outward signs of those who have put their faith in Christ. Parents should observe when their child actively shows a desire to make their life right with God by asking for and receiving forgiveness in various situations. Conviction of sin, repentance, and walking in faith and forgiveness is a good indicator that they have been born again and are ready to be baptized.

Do I have to be a member of the church to be baptized?

We have a membership process that includes classes and a personal conversation with an elder. This is not a prerequisite for baptism, but we do desire that a new believer take the important next steps of joining our church family. In cases where someone has made a profession of faith but is moving away and unable to continue to be a part of our church family, we will work closely with them to help them find a strong local church in the area where they are moving.

What about situations where there is not enough water for a full immersion?

In cases where there is not enough water for a full immersion, you should use whatever water is available to capture the spirit of the command.

What if there is not a church present in the area?

In cases where people come to faith in Jesus but there is no local church in that area (i.e. an unreached part of the world, a missionary who has just witnessed the first believer within a specific people group), it is acceptable for believers to baptize believers. The scriptural precedent for this is in Acts 8; however, this would be an exception and not the normal pattern outlined in the Scriptures.

If I participated in a “baptism or Christening ceremony” as a child/baby (without personal profession of faith in Jesus), does the church encourage me to be baptized by immersion as an adult?

Yes, we believe that the Scriptures command us to be baptized in water by immersion subsequent to our profession of faith in Christ.

We acknowledge the importance of raising our children in a covenant family and the traditions or denominations within the global Church that use baptismal ceremonies to convey this truth. It is our conviction that baptism is an act of obedience of the individual subsequent to their profession of faith, and therefore we would not consider a believer's baptism by immersion after an infant baptism/christening as a “rebaptism” but rather as their initial/first baptism.

Is baptism a pre-requisite for church membership?

Because baptism is not a prerequisite for entrance into Heaven, we likewise do not see it as a prerequisite for church membership. We have people that come from many church backgrounds and so we treat baptism just like other areas of discipleship and obedience: we teach, model, and encourage all members of the church to take steps of obedience in their faith, including baptism. We thank God that we have had many members of our church choose to be baptized by immersion after seeing this taught and modeled. This has been a very meaningful process for those who have taken that step.

Can I or should I get rebaptized?

This is a question that requires a conversation and pastoral discernment. But here are some brief thoughts:

Firstly, it's important to remember that baptism is meant to be for all who have put their faith in Christ. The prerequisite is faith and not maturity, time passed, or even obedience.

Sometimes, people have gone through an extended period of time of sinful behavior subsequent to their baptism and are desiring to renew their commitment to Christ. Other times, people grow in their faith and look back on a moment earlier in life and think "I didn't really know what I was doing" -- when in reality they were simply less mature in faith and life. In all these cases, we would still acknowledge your initial baptism and declaration of faith as genuine and would subsequently encourage you to share a public re-commitment of faith in Christ. As you recommit your life to Christ, we encourage you to cherish the glorious truth of the "perseverance of the saints."

Finally, after considering the above, if you have been previously baptized by immersion in water and are still certain that you were not born again subsequent to that, then we would encourage you to speak to a church leader about being baptized.