



Baptism Guide

THE NORTH CARROLL COOPERATIVE PARISH

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SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 6:1-11

1 So what are we going to say? Should we continue sinning so grace will multiply? 2 Absolutely not! All of us died to sin. How can we still live in it? 3 Or don't you know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. 5 If we were united together in a death like his, we will also be united together in a resurrection like his. 6 This is what we know: the person that we used to be was crucified with him in order to get rid of the corpse that had been controlled by sin. That way we wouldn't be slaves to sin anymore, 7 because a person who has died has been freed from sin's power. 8 But if we died with Christ, we have faith that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death no longer has power over him. 10 He died to sin once and for all with his death, but he lives for God with his life. 11 In the same way, you also should consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

GROW QUESTIONS:

Q1: What does United Methodism fundamentally believe about baptism?

Q2: What is the difference between infant baptism and believer's baptism?

Q3: May we have our baby dedicated instead of baptized?

Q4: Isn't it better to wait until they are older and let our children decide for themselves whether or not they want to be baptized?

SCRIPTURE READING: John 3:1-15

1 There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do these miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it's not possible to see God's kingdom." 4 Nicodemus asked, "How is it possible for an adult to be born? It's impossible to enter the mother's womb for a second time and be born, isn't it?" 5 Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. 6 Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Don't be surprised that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' 8 God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said, "How are these things possible?" 10 Jesus answered, "You are a teacher of Israel and you don't know these things? 11 I assure you that we speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you don't receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13 No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Human One. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Human One be lifted up 15 so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

GROW QUESTIONS:

Q5: How about christening?

Q6: Is sprinkling the only way that United Methodists baptize?

Q7: May I be baptized again if I feel the need?

SCRIPTURE READING: Ephesians 1:3-14

3 Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven. 4 God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God's presence before the creation of the world. 5 God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan 6 and to honor his glorious grace that he has given to us freely through the Son whom he loves. 7 We have been ransomed through his Son's blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace, 8 which he poured over us with wisdom and understanding. 9 God revealed his hidden design to us, which is according to his goodwill and the plan that he intended to accomplish through his Son. 10 This is what God planned for the climax of all times: to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven along with the things on earth. 11 We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. 12 We are called to be an honor to God's glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. 13 You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. 14 The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory.

GROW QUESTIONS:

Q8: How can I "remember [my] baptism and be thankful" when I was baptized as a baby?

Q9: May a person who has not been baptized participate in Holy Communion?

Q10: How do we express our own decisions to be Christian disciples if we have already been baptized as infants?

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 Corinthians 2:15-17

15 We smell like the aroma of Christ's offering to God, both to those who are being saved and to those who are on the road to destruction.

16 We smell like a contagious dead person to those who are dying, but we smell like the fountain of life to those who are being saved. Who is qualified for this kind of ministry? 17 We aren't like so many people who hustle the word of God to make a profit. We are speaking through Christ in the presence of God, as those who are sincere and as those who are sent from God.

GROW QUESTIONS:

Q11: Does baptism mean that I am saved?

Q12: Do I have to be baptized in order to be saved?

Q13: How can I recommit myself to Christ when I have had a powerful spiritual experience?

Q14: Why does The United Methodist Church so understand baptism, membership, and salvation?

GROW QUESTION ANSWER KEY:

Q1: What does United Methodism fundamentally believe about baptism?

A: *Baptism is a sacrament. In a sacrament, God uses common elements -- in this case, water -- as means or vehicles of divine grace. Baptism is administered by the church as the Body of Christ. It is the act of God through the grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.*

Q2: What is the difference between infant baptism and believer's baptism?

A: *In all forms of Christian baptism, God claims those being baptized, whatever their age or ability to profess their faith, with divine grace. Clearly an infant can do nothing to save himself or herself, but is totally dependent on God's grace, as we all are -- whatever our age.*

Most traditions that practice or recognize as valid the baptism only of believers -- those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ for themselves in some public way -- practice baptism not as a means of grace by which God saves and claims us, but rather as a further act of public profession and/or an act of obedience to the command of Christ that his followers be baptized. That is why these "believer's baptism only" traditions generally refer to baptism as an ordinance -- an act ordained or commanded by Christ -- rather than a sacrament. The term sacrament means "an oath" and refers to God's covenant with us (first of all) and ours in response to God's gracious provision of salvation in Jesus Christ.

United Methodists recognize the baptism of "believers only" traditions, provided those traditions baptize people in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as generally understood in historic Christianity. We offer baptism to people of all ages who have not previously received Christian baptism in any form. We do not rebaptize those who have already received Christian baptism in any form. Even when the people being baptized are believing adults and are ready to profess their faith, our first emphasis is upon the gracious action of God who establishes the covenant of baptism with us rather than upon the individual's decision.

Q3: May we have our baby dedicated instead of baptized?

A: No. The theological understandings of the two services are very different. Dedication is a human act -- something we pledge or give to God. Baptism is a divine act, a pledge and gift God gives to us. Baptism of infants includes the reaffirmation of the vows of the baptismal covenant by parents, sponsors, and the congregation; but chiefly it celebrates what God is doing and will do in the life of the infant.

Q4: Isn't it better to wait until they are older and let our children decide for themselves whether or not they want to be baptized?

A: No. We no more wait for our children to decide about being in the family of God than we wait for them to decide if they would like to be a part of our human family. As parents, we make many decisions -- in matters of health, safety, education, for example - - for our children. Of course, they may later reject what we have done for them. But this possibility does not relieve us of the responsibility to do all that we can for them spiritually, as we do in other aspects of their lives.

Q5: How about christening?

*A: Christening is not a separate ritual, but rather historically part of the ritual of baptism. The use of the term christening for the sacrament probably comes from two sources: chrism is the word for the anointing oil traditionally used in baptism as a sign of the sealing by the Holy Spirit; second, in the past, children were sometimes actually given their (Christian) names in baptism. In our current ritual, parents are not asked for the name of the child, but the pastor does baptize with that name and without using the family or surname. This meaning of christening is expressed, for example, in a ceremony for the naming of a ship. Unfortunately, the term christening has been used sometimes in our history as a way of diminishing the significance of infant baptism or of indicating that it is something different from and less than the baptism of an adult. This view is completely inconsistent with the Wesleyan understanding as expressed in *By Water and the Spirit, the Services of the Baptismal Covenant* in our hymnal and *Book of Worship, and The Book of Discipline*.*

Q6: Is sprinkling the only way that United Methodists baptize?

A: No, our church has always offered to people being baptized and to the parents of infants the choice of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

Q7: May I be baptized again if I feel the need?

A: No, baptism is an act of God, and God does it right the first time. Our side of the covenant relationship with God will need recommitment and reaffirmation, but God always remains faithful to the divine side.

Q8: How can I "remember [my] baptism and be thankful" when I was baptized as a baby?

A: What we are called to remember in reaffirmation is the gift of God's grace, not a particular event. Through appropriate remembrances and celebrations, our children can be enabled to "remember" their baptism as much as they "remember" their physical birthday.

Q9: May a person who has not been baptized participate in Holy Communion?

A: Yes, our church does not seek to close God's Table, although the historic and normal Christian order of the sacraments is baptism first -- as birth into the family -- and Communion following, as continuing nurture at the family table. Pastors and congregations reach out and encourage those who partake at the Table to share fully in the life of God's people, including coming to the font after appropriate preparation.

Q10: How do we express our own decisions to be Christian disciples if we have already been baptized as infants?

A: In services of profession of faith and confirmation before the congregation, we respond to God's grace by repenting of our sins, declaring our faith in Jesus Christ, and becoming professing members of the church.

Q11: Does baptism mean that I am saved?

A: No, salvation is a lifelong process during which we must continue to respond to God's grace. Baptism offers the promise that the Holy Spirit will always be working in our lives, but salvation requires our acceptance of that grace, trust in Christ, and ongoing growth in holiness as long as we live.

Q12: Do I have to be baptized in order to be saved?

A: No, but baptism is a gift of God's grace to be received as part of the journey of salvation. To refuse to accept baptism is to reject one of the means of grace that God offers us.

Q13: How can I recommit myself to Christ when I have had a powerful spiritual experience?

A: Confirmation and profession of faith are only the first of our affirmations of faith. As we experience God's work in our ongoing lives of discipleship, we can express our commitment through participation in services of baptismal reaffirmation (Baptismal Covenant IV).

Q14: Why does The United Methodist Church so understand baptism, membership, and salvation?

A: United Methodism stands in the historic heritage of the Christian faith through the ages and, specifically, in the legacy of John Wesley. Wesley was an Anglican priest. As a

result, United Methodism has inherited a "high" understanding of the church, the sacraments, and other aspects of worship. Wesley was also an evangelical revivalist. As a result, United Methodism emphasizes the necessity of conversion, personal relationship with Christ, and witnessing to others. Neither of these aspects alone represents who we are. As United Methodists, we hold the two together in our baptismal theology and practice and in our broader understanding of how God works in our lives for salvation.

Dr. Gayle C. Felton and Peggy Sewell prepared this Q & A for the Discipleship Ministries. It was updated in 2008 by Taylor Burton Edwards, Director of Worship Resources with Discipleship Ministries.

<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/faqs-about-baptismmembership-and-salvation>

CALL TO WORSHIP

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Leader : Brothers and sisters in Christ: Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.

People: We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit.

All: All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER PRAYER

UMH pg 36

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Eternal Father:

When nothing existed but chaos, you swept across the dark waters and brought forth light. In the days of Noah you saved those on the ark through water. After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow. When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt, you led them to freedom through the sea. Their children you brought through the Jordan to the land which you promised.

Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Tell of God's mercy each day.

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus, nurtured in the water of a womb. He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit. He called his disciples to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection and to make disciples of all nations.

Declare Christ's works to the nations, his glory among all the people.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, to bless this gift of water and those who receive it, to wash away their sin and clothe them in righteousness throughout their lives, that, dying and being raised with Christ, they may share in his final victory.

**All praise to you, Eternal Father, through your Son Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever.
Amen.**

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