



UNITED
C H U R C H

BAPTISM
GUIDE

HELPING YOU CONNECT WITH GOD

So you think you are ready to be baptized... that's awesome. This is a big step in following Jesus. We want to ensure you fully understand what baptism is all about and what it means for you. Remember, this marks the beginning of your lifelong journey with Jesus.

Baptism isn't just something we do for fun, and it's not just about tradition. Baptism is our obedient response to sharing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Throughout this booklet, you will discover what all of that means. We are very excited that you are taking this step, and look forward to watching you grow in your relationship with Jesus.

So why do we believe in baptism?

THE CHALLENGE

Read the following passages that help us better understand the challenges we face.

"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'" **Romans 3:10, 23**

"... when we were still powerless,..." **Romans 5:6**

"... at the time you were separated from Christ... without hope and without God in the world." **Ephesians 2:12**

"For the wages of sin is death, ..." **Romans 6:23**

What Challenges do we face? What is the result of these challenges?

Our attempts to find peace with God often fall short. What types of things have you done or have you observed others doing to find peace with God?

The Bible clearly says that there is nothing we can do to find peace with a perfect God. We simply can't measure up on our own.

YOUR STORY

As you start to discover what baptism means you will also begin to see how your story is part of God's story. Before coming to your decision to follow Christ and be baptized, what was your relationship with God like?

What was your life like before this decision? (What were the most important things to you... how did you treat people... what view did you have on yourself or your life?)

What was your view of the future... where did you think your life was headed?

Read **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

GOD'S GRACE

So if we are separated from God... what do we do? Christ's death, burial, and resurrection presents us with the opportunity to find peace with God.

"For He longs for all to be saved and to understand this truth: that God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, himself a man, is between them to bring them together, be giving his life for all mankind." **1 Timothy 2:4, 6**

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way, and the truth and the life.'" **John 14:6**

"But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved." **Ephesians 2:4, 5**

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” **John 3:16**

How do these verses make you feel about God? What should our response to God be based on His grace?

OUR COMMITMENT

Our private commitment first of all includes “faith”.

What does it mean to have faith?

“But now God has shown us a different way to heaven – not by ‘being good enough’ and trying to keep His laws, but by a new way though new, really, for the scriptures told about it long ago. Now God says He will accept and acquit us – declare us ‘not guilty’ – if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like.” **Romans 3:21, 22**

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” **Hebrews 11:6**

“... faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” **James 2:17**

In response to the above reading, what does it mean to have faith? What do we need to do to truly experience God’s grace?

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Repentance is an inward change of mind, affections, convictions, and commitment. We literally change the direction we are headed and start heading a new direction. When accompanied by faith in Jesus, repentance results in a public turning toward God and a life that honors Him. Read what happened in the lives of those who heard about the opportunity of God’s grace...

“Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this, God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” **Acts 2:36**

The Jews knew what this meant. Jesus was there Messiah!

The people were deeply moved by Peter’s message. The text says, “they were cut to the heart.” They responded by saying to Peter and the other disciples by saying:

“Brothers, what shall we do?” **Acts 2:37**

They wanted to now how to respond to this conviction.

Peter replied by saying: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” **Acts 2:38**

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” **Acts 3:19**

What makes repentance difficult? How has it been difficult for you?

OUR WORDS & ACTIONS

Our private commitment first of all includes faith and repentance. Our public commitment included confession and baptism.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and is it with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” **Romans 10:9, 10**

YOUR STORY

Explain the things that happened in your life that helped you realize your need for God? How did you hear about Jesus?

What helped you understand your need for Jesus? (describe your feelings and thoughts... both positive and negative)

What did you do or say to take the first step in following Christ? (where were you – what happened?)

What does it mean for you to confess “Jesus is Lord?”

What could being baptized communicate to your family and friends?

Here at United, we believe baptism is part of the process of following Christ. There are several reasons followers of Christ get baptized.

- Jesus was baptized (**Mark 1:9**)
- Jesus tells us to baptize and teach new disciples (**Matthew 28:19-20**)
- New Christ followers always followed through with their commitment by being baptized (**Acts 18:8**)

Beyond these reasons, baptism also teaches and reminds us of our connection to Christ.

“Christ died for our sins... He was buried... and He rose again.” **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**

“For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ.” **Colossians 2:12**

What connection do you see between Christ’s actions and baptism?

MY NEW LIFE

There is symbolism found in baptism... however a real transformation also starts to take place in us. Through the power of God in the Holy Spirit we begin a new life in Christ.

Read the following verses...

“When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!” **2 Corinthians 5:17**

“By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead... so also we may live a new life!” **Romans 6:4**

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9**

What change takes place in someone following Christ?

What does it mean to share in Jesus' death so that we may have new life?

What changes are starting to take place, or need to take place, in your new life as a Christ follower?

Are there any changes that you know you need help with? Who will you ask to help you in these things?
What questions do you still have about following Christ?

BEING BAPTIZED

At United Church, we baptized by immersion (meaning “under the water”). There are several reasons we baptize this way. Think about the following questions and verses...

How was Jesus baptized?

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.” **Matthew 3:16**

“Up out” indicates that there was a bunch of water involved. It was not pouring or sprinkling. Otherwise there would be no need to go to the Jordan River (the place where Jesus and others were baptized).

What type of baptism do we see in the Bible? _____

The word “baptize” means to “dip into water.” The original Greek word Jesus used when talking about baptism was “baptize”, which means to “immerse, submerge, or dip under water.”

Baptism by immersion (fully under the water) symbolizes a burial – as we go under water – and resurrection – as we come back up out of the water.

Who should get baptized? _____

Does everyone get baptized? Should we just go around dunking people to make them obedient to Christ? Read the next couple of verses to help you understand who should be baptized.

“Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized...” **Acts 2:41**

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News... and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized...” **Acts 8:12-13**

YOUR STORY

Who are the people you look up to most spiritually?

Have you spoken to them about baptism? **YES** or **NO**

How will your life look different now that you have committed to following Christ? What hope do you now have in this new life with Christ?

Who can baptize you?

- Anyone immersed believer may baptize you (ex. any pastor, parent, mentor, small group leader, friend or other family member). Additionally, you may want to have someone else in the water with you. This may be someone who has been influential in your spiritual development.