

## What shall I do next?

### Are you a believer?

If you are not a Christian don't ask for baptism yet. Talk to Christians, read the Bible, a Christian book, or ask about an Alpha Course or Christianity Explored, to find out more about Jesus and Christianity for yourself.

### Have you become a Christian recently?

You may also benefit from an Alpha Course, Christianity Explored or Discipleship Explored. These groups will help you to live for Jesus and will prepare you for baptism. Speak to a member of the Leadership Team about getting baptised.

### Do you not feel good enough?

That's fine, because no one is. Baptism is about us identifying with what Christ has already done for us at the cross. Your baptism declares the righteousness of Christ which you have received by faith in Him.

### Concerned about total immersion?

If you want to be baptised but physical frailty or some other reason makes immersion difficult or even impossible, please speak to a member of the Leadership Team – we can make special arrangements for you.

### Christian but not baptised?

If you have been a Christian for some years and have never been baptised, then you should consider obeying Christ's command.

### I've been christened as a baby

In being baptised you are fulfilling the promises and commitments that your parents or guardians made when they had you christened. In making your decision we would encourage you to consider prayerfully the New Testament teaching where baptism follows repentance and belief in Christ.

'Go and make disciples, and baptise them.' (Matthew 28:19)

'Repent and be baptised.' (Acts 2:38)

'They believed Philip as he preached the good news, and were baptised.' (Acts 8:12)

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# Baptism

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# Baptism:

## What's it all about?

From the earliest days of the church, baptism has been the visible sign and public witness that an individual has become a Christian. It is a means of demonstrating to others that a person has accepted Jesus as their Saviour and a declaration of their intention to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

### Jesus commanded baptism

When a Christian is baptised they are obeying Jesus. Jesus said to His disciples 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:18-20).

### Jesus Himself was baptised

Jesus was baptised, not because He needed forgiveness, but out of obedience to God. When you are baptised, you identify with the obedience of Jesus. Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptise Him saying, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness' (Matthew 3:15).

### The Apostles taught baptism

New believers need to be baptised. Peter made this plain at Pentecost, when he preached 'Repent and be baptised, 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' (Acts 2:38).

### The first believers were baptised

3000 new Christians were baptised after Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:41). Philip baptised believers in Samaria (Acts 8:12) and the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:38). Paul was baptised after his conversion (Acts 9:18), as was anyone who became a Christian in the New Testament (Acts 16:15, 33).

## So what does baptism mean?

### A sign of union with Christ

Baptism points to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for us. Going down into the water signifies dying with Christ. Coming out of the water symbolises our union with Christ in resurrection life. The apostle Paul explained, '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' (Romans 6:4).

### A sign of cleansing from sin

Being baptised cannot make us clean spiritually. Only Jesus' death can "make us clean from every sin" (1 John 1:7). But the physical immersion is symbolic and points to being washed clean by God. As Ananias said to Paul "What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away calling on [Jesus'] name" (Acts 22:16).

### A sign of God's Spirit in you

From the moment you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives in you and wants to fill your life. Baptism is a sign of His presence. One of the ways Jesus described the Spirit was 'living water', so the waters of baptism point to the streams of living water flowing from within (John 7:38).

### A sign of entering the Church

When you give your life to Christ, God both forgives and adopts you. Now you can know God as your Father! But that is not all. He gives you new brothers and sisters in the family of believers. This means that baptism is not just a sign of your new relationship with God. It is also a sign of your new belonging in the Church, the body of Christ. As the apostle Paul explained, 'We were all baptised by one Spirit into one body' (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### A sign of confession of faith

Without personal faith, baptism is merely a rite, an empty symbol without meaning or value. Baptism cannot give you faith. To be baptised outwardly before you believe inwardly is like trying to push open your front door before you turn the key in the lock – it won't get you anywhere. Once you have come to faith, baptism is a public confession of belief, declaring to all that you now belong to God. Invite your friends and family to witness your obedience to God.