

What does Christ Community affirm about... Baptism?

Overview and Introduction

Christ Community affirms that baptism is a sacred act of public obedience and functions to announce professed faith and a belonging to God's family. In other words, we affirm a believers' baptism.

This pamphlet will provide the Scriptural basis for this statement, show the difference with other traditions, and then explain how baptism functions in our church life today.

Scriptural Support

We believe the Scripture calls all followers of Jesus to be baptized. Since our mission statement ("*To be disciples who make disciples and plant churches*") begins with being disciples, we emphasize the importance of baptism.

On one level, baptism is a *command to obey*. Jesus calls his followers to "make disciples of all nations... baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19).

In the book of Acts, baptism is a *public response to new faith*. A host of verses show new believers being baptized, usually very soon after their conversion (Acts 2:38, 8:38, 9:18, 10:48, 16:15, 16:33).

In Romans 6:1-11, Paul uses baptism as a *sign of our union with Christ*, dying with him in old self and rising with him in newness of life (see also, Col 2:12).

Baptism is also a sign of our *unity together* in the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians and Ephesians describe our baptism as one of the ways we share in Christ together through the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 4:5).

Other Traditions

Responding to Scripture, baptism has played a key role in the Church from the start, most often as an act of initiation into the Church family. There are many nuanced views on baptism across denominational lines – two of the most common are the Catholic and Reformed views.

We differ from both traditional Catholic and Reformed understandings of baptism that believe the act as the means by which God imparts saving grace (former) or the sign of God's kept covenant (latter). Though we have a different conviction from these traditions, we intentionally affirm the unity of faith we have with all believers in Christ.

The Catholic Church understands baptism as a sacrament meant to take away original sin, and points to Bible passages such as Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 that seem to include both

faith and baptism as necessary for salvation. They also see infants as included in this rite, by assumption, in the several texts where whole “households” are baptized (Acts 16:13, 16:33, 1 Cor. 1:16).

In the Reformed view, baptism is a sacrament. It does not save but it does replace circumcision as the New Testament’s sign and seal of grace, ensuring the fulfillment of God’s promises (Col 2:11-12). Since infants in the Old Testament were circumcised and belonged immediately to the faith family, so also infants in the New Testament should be baptized and belong (see the Westminster Confession, ch. 28).

What We Believe

Many traditions (collectively called “Baptistic”¹) believe that baptism neither saves nor replaces circumcision. Rather, baptism gives us a picture of an inward change (renewal of life) that has already occurred. We believe the weight of the Scripture’s teaching points to faith alone as the means of salvation, and that the sign of grace is the circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, and not an outward sign (Deut. 10:16, Ezek. 36:26-27, Col 2:11-12). Baptism, then, is a sacred act of public obedience and functions to announce professed faith and a belonging to God’s family. This is commonly called “believers’ baptism”. *This is CCC’s affirmation.*

Practice

The celebration of baptism is a significant event for both the congregation and the individual believer. For the one receiving baptism, the event sets down a clear marker in their life of a decision to follow Jesus. For the congregants who are watching, baptism gives the opportunity to remember their own profession of faith and to be encouraged again to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4) as we are united with Christ.

CCC practices full immersion baptism, as we believe it represents most truly the death-to-life process the act portrays. We have a baptismal under the staging at the front of the church, and celebrate baptism together during Sunday services from several times a year.

It’s common for a loved one or significant person for the one receiving baptized to help perform the act or participate in the ceremony.

If you are a follower of Jesus, but have never been baptized we would strongly recommend that you consider baptism as a step of obedience in Christ.

¹ Having a baptistic understanding of baptism is not co-equal with being a Baptist denomination