

# 8 Baptism and Children



# Baptism and Children



“So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

(Matt. 28:19, NIV)

Baptism is an important step; representing a believer's faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to live a life of faith and devotion to God, symbolizing Christ's life, death and resurrection, and serving as a public witness. It is generally a one-time expression and needs to be fully understood by the participant.

Baptism is one of two sacraments our tradition practices and it is a unique means of God's grace. It is a celebration of a new believer's faith and a milestone in their spiritual formation.

Children are welcome to participate in baptism within our tradition, however, they should be old enough to have a clear understanding of what baptism is, why it is important, and be able to share their belief and faith in Jesus Christ.

Because of this, we recommend an adaptation of the following in the preparation process for child baptism. The main elements include:

- Application for baptism where children share their personal faith story and parents/caregivers provide information and signify their support.
- Baptism Class Teaching element that provides basic information on baptism for the leader.
- Baptism Class Child/Parent notes that outline the teaching points and have specific information on baptism.
- Baptism of Believers ceremony from *The Discipline*.

# APPLICATION TO BE BAPTIZED:

## Child's portion

**Your thought:** What does it mean to you to be a Christian? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Your story:** When and why did you become a Christian?—A forever friend of Jesus?

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**Your faith:** What things are you doing to become more like Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Your reason:** Why do you want to be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Parent/Caregiver section

**Family Info:** Date/Name/Address/Contacts \_\_\_\_\_

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What is your understanding of believer's baptism? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you support your child's desire to be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, Please share your story: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **BAPTISM CLASS TEACHING:** (leader's notes)

### 1. Baptism in the Bible

#### Ancient Use:

- Israelites used it to symbolize washing
- Priests washed before entering Tabernacle (Exodus 40:32)

#### Jesus' Baptism:

- By John the Baptist
- Act of obedience to His Father, God
- Symbol of God's approval of Him (Matthew 3:16-17)

### 2. Baptism is a Sacrament:

- Sacred moments to honor and remember what God has done
- An outward expression or symbol of an inward event (showing on the outside something that happened on the inside...in our hearts and minds)
- God offers a special blessing or gift during the sacraments – His grace
- "We have all received one blessing after another. God's grace is not limited."  
(John 1:16 NIRV)

### 3. Why baptism:

- Baptism represents our new life in Jesus Christ

Through it we acknowledge or confess:

Our faith in Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of our sins

As water cleans your body from dirt, baptism represents the cleaning away of your sins.

"The baptism I'm talking about has nothing to do with removing dirt from your body. Instead, it promises God that you will keep a clear sense of what is right and wrong.

Jesus Christ has saved you by rising from the dead." (1 Peter 3:21b NIRV)

- Baptism symbolizes Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection

"All of us were baptized into Christ Jesus. Don't you know that we were baptized into his death? By being baptized, we were buried with Christ into his death. Christ has been raised from the dead by the Father's glory. And like Christ we also can live a new life.

By being baptized, we have been joined with him in his death. We will certainly also be joined with him in his resurrection. We know that what we used to be was nailed to the cross with him. That happened so our sinful bodies would lose their power. We are no longer slaves of sin." (Romans 6:3-6, NIV)

"When you were baptized, you were buried together with him. You were raised to life together with him by believing in God's power. God raised Jesus from the dead." (Colossians 2:12, NIV)

- Baptism is an initiation or "membership" into God's family

Your baptism is saying to other Christians: "I'm one of you."

"We were all baptized by one Holy Spirit into one body. It didn't matter whether we were Jews or Greeks, slaves or free people." (1 Corinthians 12:13 NIV)

All Christians are part of the same family - God's family - no matter how old they are, where they come from, or what they look like.

- Baptism is a public statement of our faith (Acts 1:8 and Matthew 10:32)

When you are baptized you will share your faith story

Your story is a witness of what God has done in your life

- Baptism is an act of obedience to God

When you became a Christian, you said you believed in Jesus Christ and asked Him to forgive you of your sins.

“So let us come near to God with an honest and true heart. Let us come near with a faith that is sure and strong. Our hearts have been sprinkled. Our minds have been cleansed from a sense of guilt. Our bodies have been washed with pure water.”(Hebrews 10:22 NIV)

4. What will happen?

Answer the following questions for the children and their parents. They can write responses on their Baptism Notes:

- When will I be baptized?

Provide date and time of baptism service

Explain service order and when the baptism will occur within the service

- How will I be baptized?

Explain to the children and parents which form you will use and how:

Sprinkling

Pouring

Immersion

[Our denomination offers all three methods. Your pastoral leadership can decide the best mode of baptism depending on the circumstances.]

- What should I wear?

Give suggestions on clothing attire depending on form of baptism used, if a towel will be needed and if extra clothes should be brought.

- Who should I invite?

Encourage them to invite family and friends –

Including non-Christian friends and family as witnesses

Provide invitation cards including church information, date and time

- What will I do?

Provide exact details of what the child will do, where he/she will go, and what he/she will be expected to say/share.

Do not surprise them. Provide with as much information as you can in order to make them comfortable.

- What will you do?

Explain your role and/or other pastors involved in the baptism  
What you will do, what you will say, and when things will occur

- Do you have any questions?

Allow opportunity for them to ask questions, providing answers and explanations.

#### 5. Are You Ready?

Have each child respond to the following questions:

- Do you believe that:

God sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to earth as a baby?

Jesus grew up and taught people about God's love?

Jesus, who had never sinned, died on a cross to take the punishment for your sins because He loves you?

Jesus rose from the dead and walked on earth again, then went back to Heaven where he's building a place just for you?

- Can you tell me your faith story? How Jesus became your forever friend?

- Can you tell me why Christians, Jesus' forever friends, are baptized?
- Is it your promise to live your life in a way that makes God happy, to learn more about Him, and to grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study, worship and serving?
- Do you feel comfortable with what will happen?
- After knowing all this, do you still wish to be baptized?
- Parents/Caregivers, do you still support your child's baptism?

For additional teaching material:

*Building Faith Kids, Growing Like Jesus*, Wesleyan Publishing House, 2005.

*Building Faith Kids, Knowing God's Truth,,* Wesleyan Publishing House, 2005.

# BAPTISM CLASS NOTES:

(for students and parents/caregivers)

## Baptism:

Is a Sacrament – John 1:16

Represents our new life – I Peter 3:21b

Symbolizes Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection – Romans 6:3-6

Is an Initiation into God's family – I Corinthians 12:13

Is a Public Statement of Faith – Acts 1:8

Is an Act of Obedience – Hebrews 10:22

## What will happen? (Fill in for your information)

1. When will I be baptized?
2. How will I be baptized?
3. What should I wear?
4. Who should I invite?
5. What will I do?
6. What will you (the pastor) do?

Questions:

## BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS CEREMONY:

The following is from *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church 2004* and written primarily for adult baptism. It is a good example, however, of a baptism ceremony.

(When the candidates for baptism have presented themselves before the minister, the minister shall say:)

Dear friends, in keeping with the example of Jesus, you have presented yourselves this day that you might receive the sacrament of baptism. Baptism is not itself the door to salvation, but rather is an outward sign of the new birth which God has wrought in your heart. It proclaims to all the world that you have taken Christ Jesus as the Lord of your lives, and that it is your purpose always to obey Him. In order that we may hear your testimony of what God has done for you, and that we may know that you understand the significance of the step you are taking, we want to ask you these questions:

Do you believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? That Jesus Christ the Son suffered in your place on the cross, that He died but rose again, that He now sits at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge all people at the last day? And do you believe in the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God? That by the grace of God every person has the ability and responsibility to choose between right and wrong, and that those who repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are justified by faith?

Answer: All this I steadfastly believe.

Do you intend by this act to testify to all the world that you are a Christian and that you will be a loyal follower of Christ?

Answer: I do.

(Then the minister shall ask the name of each candidate and shall immerse the candidate in water, or if desired, sprinkle or pour water, saying:)

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Then the minister shall pray.)

*The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church 2004, p. 362.*