



## Being baptised

## What is baptism?

In the New Testament, being baptised was a public identification by born-again Christians with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Symbolically, the old life is buried under the water and we rise again to new life through the work of Jesus on the cross. Jesus himself was baptised in obedience to God the Father as a prophetic foreshadowing of his own death, burial and resurrection.

## Why we baptise

Baptism puts a seal on our decision to follow Jesus for the rest of our lives. Being baptised is a command of Jesus and, in normal circumstances, Christians would be expected to seek baptism as soon as possible after being born-again.

The apostles also instructed people to be baptised once they were born-again and there are many examples in the New Testament of born-again Christians being baptised in obedience to these instructions.

## How we baptise

In the New Testament, there is no definitive description of the method of baptism. However, the Greek word for baptism used in the Bible means to immerse, dip or plunge. Originally it referred to the dyeing of clothing and the necessity to fully immerse the garment during the process. The implication is that the person being baptised is totally submerged, so in normal circumstances, baptism should be by full immersion in water.

## Who we baptise

Baptism is for born-again Christians, who understand what they have done and have a desire to freely declare that they count themselves dead to their former lives and have come into a new life under the Lordship of Jesus.

Some people baptise babies but there is no example of this in the New Testament. There is a clear order of believe first and be baptised afterwards. As babies cannot profess faith in Jesus for themselves, the baptism of babies and young children is not carried out at GCC.

We do have occasions when we pray for babies and young children, who are not old enough to profess faith in Jesus. This is done in thankfulness for the life of the child, to ask God to bless them and their parents and to keep them safe until such time as they can make a decision to follow Jesus for themselves.

## What does baptism do?

Baptism is a rich and moving symbol, but not something that has power of itself. Even so, because of what it symbolises and the attitude of heart it represents, it is a significant time in the life of a Christian.

It is making a declaration that settles things once and for all, giving us a foundational reference point for the rest of our lives. There is nothing “magical” about baptism. There is nothing conferred by the act of baptism itself.

Baptism is also one of the requirements for becoming a Partner in GCC.

## What happens at a baptism?

When we are baptised, we are openly declaring that we belong to Jesus, that we have died to our old life and have started a new life. For this reason, baptisms in GCC are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

Shortly before the baptism, those who are being baptised change into something suitable such as a swimming costume under a tee-shirt and shorts or some other loose-fitting lightweight clothing.

Those being baptised are asked to give a brief summary of how they came to be born-again and why they are being baptised. One at a time, each person steps into the water, which comes up to about waist height, and stands between those who are carrying out the baptism.

One of the people carrying out the baptism will speak the person's name and declare something like, "On the profession of your faith we baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Immediately after this the person being baptised will be lowered under the water briefly and lifted back up again.

We generally pause for a short while for anyone present to bring words of encouragement or to pray for the person who has just been baptised. We often sing a song or hymn that is meaningful to them before they climb out of the water to get dried and changed back into their normal clothes.

Taking photographs or videos of the proceedings is fine if the person being baptised has no objection.

## How do I get baptised?

Baptisms are held throughout the year when the need arises. If you are a born-again Christian, have not been baptised by full immersion and feel convicted that you want to take this step of obedience to Jesus, please speak to one of the church leaders.

Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? 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<sup>3-4</sup> (NIV)