



Baptism Overview

What do we believe about baptism?

Baptism is an important part of making disciples of Jesus.

As Jesus instructed his church, “Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19).

Baptism is a sacrament, a visible sign of an invisible reality.

“Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life” (*Westminster Confession 28.1*).

Baptism is an important sacrament but does not save people.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (*Ephesians 2:8-9*). “Does merely the outward washing with water itself wash away sins? No; for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins” (*Heidelberg Catechism Q72*).

Whom do we baptize?

We baptize under the authority of our session.

This authority is joyfully given when our elders have confirmed the profession of faith of the one seeking baptism, or the profession of faith of the parents seeking baptism for their child.

“The session has responsibility and authority for governing the congregation... Therefore, the session shall... authorize the administration of Baptism” (*ECO Essential Tenets*).

We embrace both “infant baptism” and “believer baptism.”

We are comfortable with parents who want to have their child baptized at an early age (to later have their child “confirm” their faith) and we are comfortable with parents who want to wait until that time when their child professes faith and desires to be baptized.

We baptize adults and children who profess faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

“In the Baptism of adults, we confess our confidence that God’s grace can make us new creations at any stage of our lives” (*ECO Essential Tenets*).

If a child has not been baptized by the time he or she participates in confirmation, baptism is offered as it is a requirement of Covenant Partnership. Confirmation is currently offered beginning in 6th grade.

We baptize children of Christian parents who profess faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Parents must commit to nurture their child in the faith until (and beyond) that day when their child makes their own public pro-

fession of faith.

“In the baptism of infants we confess our confidence in God’s gracious initiative, that a baby who cannot turn to God is nonetheless claimed as a member of the covenant community, a child of God, cleansed by grace and sealed by the Spirit....” (*ECO Essential Tenets*).

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (*John 6:44a*).

We recognize all Christian baptisms and do not rebaptize (ECO Polity, 1.0301).

How do we perform baptisms?

We baptize with water.

We do this not because water saves, but because water points to a deeper reality: that in God’s grace we are washed clean of all our sins.

Ordinarily we administer the water through sprinkling, but we also administer the water through immersion when the one being baptized prefers this.

We baptize in a gathered worshipping community.

We do this because while becoming a disciple of Jesus is very personal, it is not private. It is ultimately a communal affair, a family affair.

Ordinarily this takes place during a regular worship service. In the case of baptism by immersion, representatives of the worshipping community may gather together wherever the immersion baptism is to take place.

How do I pursue baptism?

STEP 1: INQUIRY

Contact the church to express your interest in baptism: blessings@firstandcalvary.org.

Read through First and Calvary’s Baptism Overview guide.

STEP 2: PASTORAL MEETING & SESSION APPROVAL

This is an unhurried time to meet with a pastor or elder to discuss your faith journey and desire for baptism and discuss any questions about baptism at First and Calvary.

Session votes on approval of the baptism.

STEP 3: PREPARATION

Complete any reading, study, reflection questions you received during your pastoral meeting.

Once a date for baptism is set, enter into a season of prayer and reflection to prepare spiritually for this joyous moment!

Invite family and friends to come and communicate any seating needs to your contact at the church so that seating can be reserved for your family.