

## Practical Tips for Baptisers

Here are some practical considerations for conducting a baptism that's a worthy celebration of the transforming grace and love of God in Christ.

### Preparing Candidates

This is such an important pastoral process. Shaping healthy expectations in those who are setting out in a life of following Jesus is a precious and powerful ministry. The preparation process will likely be unique for each candidate. See our range of [resources for candidates](#)

### Invitations

Who is going to be present? The church are not merely spectators, but play an active part in receiving and affirming the candidate as a sibling in God's family. But who else? Baptisms can be a very powerful witness, and one which not-yet-believers connected to the candidate may be very happy to attend. Consider also the ability for children to (safely) see and hear all that happens. It's a wonderful part of faith development to 'normalise' that people turn to Christ and are transformed. Where not everyone can attend, can the event be photographed or videoed or livestreamed? Or the story of the event retold for others?

### Location

Just about any body of water can be used for a baptism, including a purpose-built church baptistery. When choosing which is best, take into account the candidate's preference, but also how to give opportunity for others to witness and celebrate the event. Climate, water safety and the risk of interruption are other factors.

### Have a 'Dry Run'

It can be very helpful for all involved to meet together a day or two (or hour or two) before the event and go over exactly what will happen. Who will stand where, what will be said, and how it all will go. Help candidates and all those who will be getting wet to think through the logistics of doing so and how and where they will also get dry again. (Hint: You simply cannot have too many towels.) Avoiding awkward or embarrassing moments in the baptism will help everyone - including those watching who are themselves considering baptism.

### Water Safety

Don't skim over this! As a special public event, the regular items and systems for water safety are often not in place. A tragedy or even a scare would have such far-reaching effects that it is well worth making specific plans to keep the event absolutely safe. Make it impossible for children (especially) to have unsupervised access to the water. Consider also slip hazards once wet people emerge from the water.

### Testimonies

There are many reasons why it can be great for candidates to share their story and faith in their own words. This is not absolutely necessary though, and it would be unhelpful for people to avoid baptism through fear of public speaking. Think about different ways that a testimony could be conveyed - in writing, or via a video interview, etc. It may be that the candidate's simple 'Yes' to the question/s and act of being baptised will be appropriate. But for those willing to share, talk it through beforehand and encourage them to (a) Ensure that Jesus is the hero of the

story and (b) that it's helpful (in length and content) to those who will be present - especially kids and visitors. [Glorifying God (a) and serving others (b) will be a pattern for all future ministry and life.]

### **Wording the Question/s**

Scripture does not dictate the exact wording of a baptism, but here is a suggestion with regard to what's essential. It is two-fold, themed around death and resurrection:

Do you turn your back on living your own life independently of God, and renounce all sin and evil? [Yes/I do]

And do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, and receive the new and eternal life he offers in the family of God the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit? [Yes/I do]

Then [Name], I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

### **Prayer**

Immediately after the baptism - and really still included as part of the baptism - should be a time of prayer for the candidate. It may be a great opportunity to invite other leaders and believers to lay hands on the candidate and pray for filling with the Holy Spirit. Pray not merely for an immediate experience of the Spirit (which may not but may very well happen), but commissioning the candidate into a life of ministry and service as the Spirit enables. Pray for all those who will be blessed by God through the candidate.

### **Celebration**

Jesus teaches quite emphatically about the rejoicing in heaven over every lost one that is found (Luke 15). It is very fitting to have a celebration - a big celebration around a baptism. Just as with a wedding reception, it does not necessarily need to be lavish or expensive. But if there is no celebration or muted celebration, that itself says something about what has just taken place. Baptism is not merely the ticking off of a formal technicality. It is far from being an empty ritual. So let's fill it with feasting and joy as is possible.

### **Follow-Up**

Since a baptism is an initiation, not a graduation, it should be vitally connected to what comes next. If you are inducted into the army, boot camp is not far away. Similarly, it is important not just to check in pastorally with someone who is recently baptised, but to consider a 'what next' plan with them that launches them into the best possible start on a pathway of discipleship, development, ministry and mission.