



The Bridge Church

Fact Sheet: Baptism

Hello!

At The Bridge Church, we believe that baptism is a significant symbol of the Gospel and of belonging to Christ's spiritual body. We hope this will help your thinking about baptism.

Adult Baptism

If you are an adult who was not baptised as an infant but in faith now wishes to be so, we'd love to hear from you. We regularly conduct adult baptisms by full emersion in Sydney Harbour.

Infant Baptism ('Christening')

Infant Baptism is also a celebration of new life, but it involves a weightier public commitment on the part of parents and godparents. Baptism is for those who:

- Have an established personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour;
- Regularly attend church and are involved in the life of the congregation;
- Want their child to know God as they do and are committed to raise him/her to know God's word and His people.

Because of the serious nature of the public statements and promises made by the adults in the service, we only offer infant baptism to those who exhibit a clear faith in Christ as active members of The Bridge Church. Of course, we realise that godparents will often come from other churches.

Baptism points to Jesus' saving work in the lives of those who trust in him. As a totally just God, He has every reason to judge us for our sin. He is also deeply merciful, and He has sent His only son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve on the cross. When we acknowledge our sin and place our trust in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are united to Him and He forgives us.



The symbolic act of baptism points to these realities of union with Christ, and the 'washing' of forgiveness through him. The individual is 'clean' or right before God and he or she has entered into a whole new relationship with Him and other believers.

Adults who know God's forgiveness and are actively involved in the church, naturally want their kids to know Jesus, His promises and His people, as they do. Because infants can't speak for themselves, Christian parents and godparents are asked to speak on the child's behalf before God. They state their personal trust in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. They also make promises about how they intend to raise the child to know the promises of God within the life of His church.

We either submerge the child in water or sprinkle water on the child's head to symbolize the 'washing' from sin and the gift of new life.

It is important to state that the act of baptism does not automatically make the child right with God or 'saved'. Rather, it is a public prayer for God's mercy on this child, who has the privilege of growing up in a home that honours the Lord and is committed to His church. We pray that the child will one day claim by faith what the parents and godparents already have - salvation in Christ.

The promises previously mentioned which parents and godparents make are as follows:

1. That you are willing to be the chief teacher of the child, 'accepting responsibility for his/her Christian upbringing'; that you're 'willing to give your child this help and encouragement by every means in your power'. Specifically, teaching them to worship God, pray to Him, put their faith and trust in Him and to take their place in the life of the church.
2. That you yourself are 'a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of His Church, sincerely believing the promises of God' (obviously necessary in order to fulfil promise 1). This means that you don't hold the same values as the world around you, nor allow yourself to be directed simply by the desires of your flesh. Rather, with God's help, you 'will keep God's holy will and commandments, and serve Him faithfully throughout your life'. This promise is often accompanied by a statement of faith, known as 'the apostle's creed'.

Please contact your congregational pastor to discuss an infant baptism. If you are not yet a member of church, we will ask you to attend church, and a course aimed at introducing you further to Jesus Christ.

Infant Thanksgiving

As an alternative to Infant Baptism, we also offer a thanksgiving service for those wishing to thank God, celebrate and pray for their child within a Christian tradition. A Thanksgiving Service is a beautiful celebration of God's gift of a newborn child. This service is for parents and godparents who:



- occasionally go to church;
- may have a traditional family connection to the church;
- want an opportunity to publicly celebrate a new arrival with family and friends;
- want to give their children an opportunity to explore Christian faith for themselves when they get older;
- like the values and moral framework of the Christian faith.

There is no water used in the Thanksgiving Service. The parents and godparents do not need to make any faith declarations or promises.

The features of the Thanksgiving service are:

- We thank God for the birth of this child.
- We read a selected Bible passage for the child.
- We pray for the child by name, seeking his blessing on his or her life ahead.
- We pray for parents in their vital role.
- We pray for the child's godparents in their special relationship to the family and the child.

There is also space for added elements, such as prayers, special readings, and celebrating stories of the child.

Please contact us if you are interested in this.

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Phone: (02) 8920 9817

Email: admin@thebridgechurch.org.au

