

# **ELIM BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **PREPARING FOR BAPTISM**

*A Guide for Baptismal Candidates*

## I. WHAT IS BAPTISM?

### A. Baptism is one of the first acts of obedience for Christian believers

Baptism in the Bible always follows hearing the Word of the Gospel and receiving it by faith. It is administered to those who make a confession of faith that is evidenced through Gospel obedience. There are no examples of baptizing infants or any other unregenerate person in the New Testament. In the New Testament, baptism followed very closely after the moment of conversion. All baptismal candidates in our church must also meet the membership requirements (see *Preparing for Membership: A Guide for Membership Candidates*).

*Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, Acts 2:41, Acts 16:31-34, Acts 8:36; Acts 18:7*

### B. Baptism with water symbolizes cleansing from sin

Baptism does not effect inner renewal and forgiveness of sin but it portrays those realities.

*Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21*

### C. Baptism identifies you with Jesus Christ

Baptism is a public declaration of your faith in Jesus and formally identifies you with Him.

*Romans 6:3-5, Colossians 2:12, Galatians 3:27*

### D. Baptism identifies you with the church, the body of Christ

One cannot be united with Christ the head but not united with his body, the church. Baptism effects the public identification with and submission to the local church. We call this identification Covenant Membership. Covenant Membership enables a believer to participate in all the privileges and responsibilities of everybody who represents Jesus to the world.

*1 Corinthians 12:13, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13*

### E. How is Baptism practiced?

Baptism is best practiced by the immersion of a believer in water. This best represents the meaning of baptism and the practice of the early church. Based on biblical witness and historical witness, baptism upon credible confession of faith by a mode other than immersion is legitimate and fulfills the baptismal requirement for Covenant Membership. Full immersion in water will be the practice of our local church.

## II. THE BAPTISM SERVICE

### A. Baptism and Membership Process

Before the baptism service, you will complete the membership application process. The purpose is not to delay your baptism, but to make sure that both you and the church know that you are prepared for this act of obedience. For more information, see *Preparing for Membership: A Guide for Membership Candidates*.

### B. Sharing your personal testimony

Since baptism is a public proclamation of your faith in Christ, all baptismal candidates will verbalize this confession. Your personal testimony should be not more than three minutes long. It should include your life before Jesus, how you came to Jesus, and how Jesus has changed your life. It should also include the content of the Gospel that you are confessing. Some personal details should be avoided and other churches and leaders should not be criticized by name. A pastor or deacon will assist you in preparing your testimony. Invite family and friends to attend the service so that they can hear you confess faith in Christ and they can watch you commit yourself to Him through baptism.

### C. Before the service

Bring two sets of clothes and a towel. Wear dark coloured clothes and dress modestly. An appropriate room will be used for changing before and after the baptism.

### D. During the service

You will join the pastor or deacon in the water and share your testimony there. For the immersion, cross your arms in front of your chest, or if you prefer, you can plug your nose with one hand and hold your wrist with the other. The pastor or deacon will baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, immersing you backwards into the water. It helps to bend your knees so that it is easier for the pastor or deacon to bring you back up. You then exit the baptismal tank and proceed to dry off and change in the designated area.

### E. After the service

Once you are changed (don't worry about wet hair) you will return to the auditorium where the congregation will greet you. This is an important part of the event, because it gives the congregation an opportunity to welcome you to the fellowship of our local church.

### III. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### A. How do I know if I'm ready to be baptized?

Baptism is not reserved for mature Christians; it is for new Christians. If you have repented from your sin and trusted in Jesus as Savior and Lord, then you are ready for baptism.

#### B. Can't I wait until later to be baptized?

In the Bible, baptism is very closely connected with conversion. An unbaptized Christian is not a category that the Bible recognizes. Although baptism doesn't effect salvation, it is the first act of Christian discipleship and obedience. Therefore an unwillingness to be obedient to Christ in baptism undermines the credibility of your confession of faith. Delayed obedience is disobedience.

#### C. What if I am scared of water?

You will not be alone in the baptismal pool; the pastor or deacon will support you. The descent into the water is brief, and the depth is little more than a bathtub. If your fears persist, look to Christ for courage to overcome those fears in obedience to him.

#### D. Can children be baptized?

Baptism will be granted to children who can provide a credible confession of faith at the discretion of the deacons and of the parents where appropriate.

#### E. What if I was baptized as an infant?

Your infant baptism in another congregation may hold significance for you and we do not want to deny or belittle your experience. However, the Bible commands disciples of Jesus to be baptized as a personal response to faith in the Gospel.

#### F. Are churches that practice infant baptism true churches?

Yes. Churches that faithfully preach and live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ are all true churches. We consider denominations such as Presbyterians, Lutherans, Reformed, and others who practice infant baptism to be true churches, provided they faithfully preach the Gospel. However, we believe that the issue of believer baptism is important enough that we acknowledge believer baptism alone as being biblically faithful. We are happy to partner with all Gospel-preaching churches in certain types of ministry.