

Preparation for
WATER BAPTISM

A guide for prospective baptismal candidates
at Indian Hills Community Church

Preparation for Water Baptism

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Systematically Teaching the Word

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Board of Elders has prepared this explanatory booklet to help prospective baptismal candidates understand the implications of being a baptized believer. The following statement reflects the position of Indian Hills Community Church on the ordinance of baptism:

The Board of Elders urges adults (beyond high school) who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, understanding the cost and commitment of being a disciple, to be baptized.

Baptism is performed only for people who have, according to the above statement, *“placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, understanding the cost and commitment of being a disciple.”*

Since salvation is pictured in water baptism, the section from the church *Statement of Faith* detailing the topic of salvation states:

We believe salvation is the gift¹ of God’s grace given to all whom God has elected to salvation. It includes all that God does in saving the elect from the penalty, power, and presence of sin and in restoring them to a right relationship with God. As such, it is solely the work of God from initiation to completion. It cannot be gained by good works, but is a free gift for all who put their trust in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. All who so trust in Jesus Christ as

1. **Gift:** Because of man’s depravity, blindness, and rebellious nature, salvation is possible only as a gift given without merit (Eph. 2:8-9).

Savior and Lord are forgiven² and saved from their sins and declared righteous by God and are born into the family of God by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. God's purpose for saving His elect is so that they bring glory to Him by their lives (Eph. 1:7; 2:8,9; John 1:12; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 1:6; Titus 2:11-14).

2 Forgiven: Total forgiveness is granted by God based on the substitutional death of Christ on behalf of the believer. All believers acknowledge their sinful condition and trust in the death of Christ to pay the penalty of sin past, present, and future (1 John 1:9). To acknowledge sin as sin is a confession that characterizes believers. The responsibility of believers is to flee all unrighteousness (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22), having an appreciation for the cleansing ministry of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1-2).

Procedures

Outline of the basic requirements for water baptism.

1. Read this booklet, *Preparation for Water Baptism*.
2. Read the *Statement of Faith* brochure.
3. Write (or type if possible) a personal testimony relating how you became a Christian and bring it with you to the baptism interview. Suggested length is 250 words.
4. Call the church office, 402-483-4541, to schedule a baptism interview with two elders/pastors of the church.

Supplemental literature and information

1. Booklet: *Baptism* by Gil Rugh
2. Message preached by Pastor Gil Rugh: *Christian Baptism*, Message GRM 961.

Details of the procedures.

The baptism interview is with the elders/pastors (usually two will be present). The suggested appointment times are on the half hours between 4 and 5:30 p.m. Sunday. Other times may be arranged. Plan 30 minutes for this interview. Please feel free to ask questions about any issue, doctrine, or church practice. *The interview must be conducted a minimum of one week in advance of the baptism service.*

Preparation for Water Baptism

- The interview: Be prepared to share your testimony. Typical questions are shown on pages 9 and 10 (*Baptism Interview Form*).

Based on your testimony, the elders will either encourage you to be baptized or recommend a delay for reasons they will give.

- Indian Hills Community Church practices baptism by immersion. The water is waist deep and heated. Any physical disability questions should be discussed with the elders. To protect the health of others, individuals suffering from any communicable disease cannot be baptized until the condition is corrected.
- Baptisms are usually conducted during the Sunday evening service (6 p.m.).
- If you are to be baptized, please note the following:
 - Arrive at the church by 5 p.m. (one hour before the service).
 - The individuals to be baptized will meet together (check front desk for location) for instructions. All baptism procedures will be discussed and demonstrated before the service.
 - Personal articles needed for baptism: A swim suit or underclothing, a towel and hair dryer. The church provides the baptismal robe.
 - After the evening service, those baptized are asked to come to the front of the auditorium to be greeted by the congregation.
 - Invite your friends and family to your baptism. Your testimony as a baptized believer will give you an additional opportunity to share your faith in Jesus Christ.

The Importance of Water Baptism

Matthew 28:18–20 records Christ’s instructions to His disciples shortly before His ascension to the Father. “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

This passage contains a single command: make disciples. Three words make up this command: going, baptizing, and teaching. The way in which disciples are made is through the preaching of the Gospel. A person becomes a disciple by believing the truth concerning Jesus Christ, so *disciple* is a synonym for *believer* or *Christian*. When Matthew 28 says “making disciples,” it is actually saying “make Christians.”

These verses tell us that wherever we are or wherever we go we are to be making believers. Wherever God has placed us, or will place us, we are to be spreading the Good News of the Gospel so that men and women can believe and become disciples. It is characteristic of a disciple to then be baptized and taught, but it is not part of his becoming a Christian.

The thought of an unbaptized believer is foreign to the New Testament. It was expected and demanded that if a person had indeed believed in Christ, his faith would be made evident through public baptism. Conversely, without water baptism it would be questionable whether the person had really understood and believed in Jesus Christ. In the Book of Acts, this

pattern is seen over, and over again—those who believe will be baptized.

The Significance of Water Baptism

Baptism is important because Jesus commanded us to be baptized, but what is the significance of baptism for the believer? In Matthew 28:19, Christ addresses the idea of identification through baptism: “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Again, the key idea in baptism is identification. A name represents all a person is and stands for, so to be “baptized in the name of” a person or group means to be identified with that person or group. Christian baptism identifies yourself with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When a person believes the gospel message, the Bible tells us that he is made new. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us: “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” When a person believes the gospel, he has died and has been given new life, but it was a spiritual transaction. When he believes and recognizes that Christ died for him personally, the baptism of the Spirit takes place and he is instantly transformed into a new creature, identified spiritually with Christ. But no one around him can see it happen. God can see a change of heart, but no one else can. With the passage of time, true saving faith becomes evident to others as they observe the new character of one’s life (Matthew 7:16-20).

The next step is water baptism, a public identification with Christ, testifying to the world that a spiritual transaction has taken place. It is not necessary for salvation, but it is very important in accomplishing God’s purposes in a believer’s life.

In our identification with Christ we are proclaiming that we are new creatures as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul discusses this idea of newness of life in Galatians 2:20 where he says, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live

by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

Jesus expresses this same thought in Luke 9:23 when He says, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” Our identification with Christ requires a total commitment to Him. In Luke 14, Jesus warns those who were considering following Him that they needed to consider the cost. Those who would follow Him must be willing to deny their own desires to serve Christ by being obedient to all He has commanded in the Bible.

Water Baptism Does Not Save

One point to note in closing is that water baptism does not contribute to our salvation. The Bible is clear that salvation (justification) is by God’s grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we read, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Salvation comes by faith alone and no work, including baptism, can be added as a requirement without corrupting the gospel message.

Water baptism is simply the visible testimony of an inward spiritual transformation. Water baptism publicly identifies a believer with Jesus Christ and with the body of Christ, the Church. Water baptism is commanded as an act of obedience for the one who has been saved but it does not contribute to that salvation.

Personal Response

Consider these questions as you evaluate the genuineness of your faith and your decision to be baptized:

- Have I noticed a change in the character of my life? Do I find myself compelled to do good and avoid sin?
- Have you considered the “cost of discipleship?” Is there anything that stands between you and Jesus Christ that may distract from a pure devotion to Him?

Preparation for Water Baptism

- Do you understand and accept the conditions of discipleship?
- Are you willing to pay whatever relational and material price that may be demanded of you as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Appendix A

Article IV of the church constitution defining membership is included for your information.

ARTICLE IV: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A. Qualifications for Membership

Any person who has trusted Christ as personal Savior and attends Indian Hills Community Church is considered a member of this local assembly. Members and those considering membership are encouraged to examine the *Statement of Faith* and this *Constitution* and then discuss with a pastor or an elder any matter not understood.

All members shall accept the responsibility of exercising their gift(s) of the Spirit for the benefit of the body.

The Board of Elders accepts the responsibility for the spiritual oversight of those who have believed in Christ and identify with Indian Hills Community Church by their attendance.

B. Withdrawing Membership

Membership may be withdrawn at any time by simply notifying the Church in writing of such intent, provided that such withdrawal is during a time when the member is in good standing with the Church. Good standing of a member is lost when:

1. A known and unrepentant sin continues to be practiced by the member.

2. The member is teaching doctrines contrary to the Church's *Statement of Faith*. Anyone accused of teaching false doctrine may appeal to the Board of Elders to present his view. The Board of Elders has ultimate authority in deciding whether a teaching is in error.
3. The member is exhibiting a divisive spirit in the Church.

C. Submitting to the Elders

The congregation is to be submissive to the rule of the Board of Elders in the same way Christians are to be submissive to Christ. Each member is to accept the privilege of local Church membership and accept the Elders' leadership and loving discipline. This order also establishes unity in practice and doctrine in the Church. (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Tim. 5:17).

D. Voting Rights

No member shall have any voting rights on any matter pertaining to the Church.

E. Discipline of Church Members

To maintain the peace and purity of the Church, Scripture directs the disciplining of any wayward person by restricting active participation and membership in the local Church. Discipline shall be imposed whenever there is uncorrected, deliberate sin, whether in doctrine or in practice (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:16-21). Matthew 18 states the procedure in a step-by-step fashion. The following presents a listing of these steps.

Step 1: Reasonable efforts shall be made, by those who have first-hand knowledge of the doctrinal error or sin, to attempt to correct the offender and encourage the offender to practice the truth and cease from sin (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3; Gal. 6:1). If the offender admits to and stops the sin, the matter is dropped.

Preparation for Water Baptism

Step 2: If private reproof fails, the matter shall be brought to the offender by one or more additional witnesses who offer further reproof and spiritual counsel (Matt. 18:16; Deut. 19:15). If the offender admits to and stops the sin, the matter is dropped. If the offender refuses to repent, such witnesses stand as additional evidence of the offender's unwillingness to repent.

Step 3: After reasonable attempts to correct the member have failed, the charges shall be submitted to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders will present the matter to the church body and request prayer for the offending member (Matt. 18:17). During this time, the offending person is encouraged to change his mind about his sinful course of action. If the offender admits to and stops the sin, the matter is dropped.

Step 4: If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Board of Elders, the offender shall be excluded from attendance, participation, fellowship, and membership of the congregation. The body is encouraged not to have fellowship with the offending party, but members should pray for and encourage the offender to repent and be reconciled to Christ and the Church body.

A majority vote of the Board of Elders is necessary to impose the fourth step of the disciplinary action. The decision of the Board shall be announced at a regular worship service or a specially called meeting of the Church members and carried out by the members of the Church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 1:20; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15).

All members have the right to appeal to the Board of Elders and present their case any time during and after the disciplinary process. A written request presented to any Board member is required for a hearing before the Board of Elders.

Step 5: Persons who have been so disciplined, but demonstrate repentance to any member of the Board of Elders or one of the pastors, may be restored to fellowship by a majority vote of the Board of Elders (Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

Indian Hills Community Church

Baptism Interview

Baptism Candidate Personal Information:

Name:		Spouse Name:	
Address:			
City:	Zip:	Phone:	
Beyond High School Age? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Church Background:	
Conversion Date (approximate if not known):			
Children's Names and Ages (Optional):			

Interview Questionnaire:

Please tell us how you learned about the gospel and came to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

What must a person believe to be saved?

2 Corinthians 5:17 says "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." Have you or others noticed any changes in your life since you became a Christian? Please tell us about some of them.

Preparation for Water Baptism

Baptism Interview

According to the Bible, Jesus is Lord. What does that mean? How should that truth affect the way that we live?

Why have you decided to be baptized?

What is the purpose of baptism?

Can a person be saved without being baptized? Please explain.

Have you read the section of the baptism booklet that pertains to the biblical responsibilities of being a church member? That section includes loving others, serving, putting others before yourself, encouraging others, confronting those who fall into sin and accepting the church discipline process if we fall into sin.

Do you accept these responsibilities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

The baptism testimonies are typically printed in the church newsletter. Would you also be comfortable having your testimony posted to other IHCC social media, like the IHCC Facebook page or the church website?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Additional Comments:

For Office Use	
Date of Baptism Interview: / /	Recommend for Baptism? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Interviewing Elder:	Interviewing Deacon:
Date of Baptism: / /	Baptism Performed By:

