

ALLEN CREEK'S STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

Allen Creek Community Church believes Scriptural teaching on Baptism may be summarized as follows:

1. Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ, fulfilled by individuals who have received His forgiveness and submitted themselves to His leadership.
2. Baptism symbolizes a heart washing by God's forgiveness and also an identification with Christ in His death and resurrection as the individual dies to an old way of life and lives a new life in Him.
3. Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith before the church and the world
4. Baptism is a biblical rite of initiation into the body of Christ, and it may therefore be considered a prerequisite for joining the membership of the church.

While recognizing the right for other churches to practice infant Baptism, Allen Creek teaches that only professing believers qualify for Baptism. However, Allen Creek Community Church encourages Christian parents to present their children for the ceremony of dedication, whereby God's blessing is formally invoked upon the children, and the parents publicly commit themselves to raise the children in accordance with the teachings of Scripture.

Because the symbolism of Baptism requires a more adult level of cognitive and developmental readiness, the Elders of Allen Creek suggest that children be at least 12 years old to be baptized. Proverbs 20:25 issues a significant caution against the danger of making a vow before adequate knowledge, forethought and reflection have been given. In an effort to prevent young people from making a premature commitment that they may not fully understand, this minimum age is strongly encouraged.

Allen Creek Community Church offers the options of believers' Baptism by sprinkling if circumstances require it, but regularly practices immersion as a more full representation of the symbolism baptism conveys. We believe however, that the full value of any mode lies in the faith of the participants rather than the nature or the amount of the water used.

ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM

If the purpose of Baptism is to publicly identify a believer in Jesus Christ, someone may ask, "What was the significance of my Baptism as a baby?" In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them and prayed for them and told us to welcome them. But He did not baptize them, and He did not tell anyone else to baptize them. Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation.

If you were baptized as a child, it was the intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your Baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents' wishes. It in no way repudiates the Baptism you received as a child

"BAPTIZERS" POLICY

At AC3 we believe the success of Jesus' great commission (Matt 28) lies in the ownership of that mission by all the church, to introduce their friends and family members to Christ and build them up in the faith. As such, we feel a wonderful expression of that ownership happens when a person who

receives Christ wishes to be baptized by the person who was instrumental in their decision – regardless if their position in the church is paid/unpaid, clergy/laity.

This leads us to the question, “who can/cannot perform the baptism rite?”

In Scripture we notice that often the disciples do the baptizing (John 4:2). But the same verse is clear that Jesus did not baptize. The reason is that he did not want to create a two class system of baptizing, where some folks were baptized by him while others would feel they had an “inferior” baptism by the disciples. This seems to put all water baptisms (done by human agents as opposed to the Son of God) on equal footing – below Jesus’ primary and internal baptism by the Holy Spirit at conversion.

In other cases, the disciples “order” the baptism (Acts 10:48) and it’s not specified, nor is it seen as important WHO has done the baptizing (16:15, 16:33), only that the people being baptized have in fact received Christ. This seems to indicate that baptisms were done under the care and authority of Church leaders, but not necessarily BY them. In most cases there was an extended entourage of evangelists or church planters that may have assisted.

Philip from Acts 8 provides an interesting case. He is most likely not Philip the apostle, but Philip the deacon (Acts 6:5) expressing again the ownership of the disciple making mandate of Christ by every follower of Christ, not just the senior leaders. So as a simple follower of Christ he was sanctioned to carry out the disciple making mandate which included baptizing converts (8:12). Yet he too, had strong ties to the existing church leaders, and was recognized by them as a true convert (Acts 6:3).

In light of this, it seems there is no narrow designation in Scripture for who can perform the baptism rite. We have then, these broad principles:

1. the people who baptize have been recognized in the community as true followers of Christ themselves.
2. we see those who lead people to Christ also baptizing them so we infer it should be someone who has been instrumental in their conversion process.
3. we see all baptisms taking place under the care and authority of the senior church leaders, but not necessarily done by them.

Therefore, at AC3 for someone to perform baptism they must be a senior leader (pastor/elder/small group leader) OR recognized by church leadership as genuine converts and participating members in good standing (not involved in ongoing patterns of willful disobedience) who have themselves been baptized as believers and have had a strong impact in the life of the person being baptized.