

Grace Community Church

Frequently Asked Questions – Baptism

1. Is baptism required for membership at Grace Community Church?

Yes. Jesus commands that all believers are to be baptized and to disobey this command displays a lack of submission to Christ and His church. Also, baptism is always closely connected with membership in the NT. Both go together, so only baptized believers are eligible to become members at Grace Community Church.

2. Does Grace Community Church affirm as members brothers and sisters who have not been baptized as a believer (including brothers or sisters who have only been baptized as infants)?

Grace Community Church does not affirm as members brothers or sisters in Christ who have not been baptized as believers. We are aware that many brothers or sisters view their infant baptism as biblical baptism. However, we are convinced by the testimony of Scripture that baptism is to occur after one has made a confession of faith that Jesus Christ is Lord, thus excluding infant baptism.

3. Does Grace Community Church affirm as members brothers or sisters who have not been baptized as believers by immersion (i.e., those who have been baptized as believers by pouring or sprinkling)?

Biblically, baptism is immersion. Because Scripture includes no examples of baptism by any other mode, we do not accept as members brothers or sisters who have not been baptized (i.e., immersed in water). The only exceptions to this is in cases where a believer is (or was) physically unable to be immersed in water. Beyond this exception, we are sympathetic with brothers and sisters who were “baptized” with water in another form by another local church that did not practice baptism by immersion and can, after the deliberation of the elders, choose to allow said brother or sister to join our church if they are convinced in their conscience that to be baptized by immersion would be a sin. However, we still urge such brothers and sisters who desire to become members to be baptized by immersion for various reasons: (1) as a church, we firmly believe baptism by immersion is biblical and exclusively practice baptism by immersion; (2) we believe it is good for every member of the church to be united together in a clear identification with Christ in his death and his life—and identification which is most clearly illustrated in baptism by immersion; and (3) as we participate together in the Great Commission, making disciples who will be baptized by immersion, we believe it is beneficial for members of the church to have modeled such baptism in their own lives. In light of these reasons, we desire all potential members of Grace Community Church

who have not been baptized by immersion to be baptized by immersion in obedience to the command of Christ as a portrait of the gospel of Christ for the fulfillment of the mission of Christ.

4. Does Grace Community Church affirm as members brothers or sisters who have not been baptized in the context of a local church (i.e., those who were baptized either on their own with another person, in a small group, or through a para-church organization)?

We believe baptism is one of two ordinances given by Jesus to be administered in the local church by biblically qualified pastors and elders. Because of this, we are hesitant to recognize an individual for membership if their baptism does not fall within the above parameters.

5. Does Grace Community Church baptize brothers or sisters who are not becoming members at Grace Community Church (i.e., those who desire to be baptized but for differing reasons are not able to commit to membership at Grace Community Church)?

As stated above, we believe the NT always links baptism and membership. Because of this, we are hesitant to baptize an individual who openly does not desire to commit himself or herself to membership. In unique circumstances, we would baptize an individual if they are unable to join Grace Community Church in membership, yet are soon to commit themselves to membership at another biblical church.

6. Does Grace Community Church recommend and/or establish a particular age for children to be baptized?

Grace Community Church does not recommend or establish a particular age for children to be baptized. We do not want to discourage a regenerate child from being baptized, yet also want to exercise careful discernment to avoid deception and false assurance in a child's life by baptizing him or her before he or she is biblically regenerate and able to understand, articulate, and embrace the Gospel, believer's baptism, and the responsibilities and expectations of church membership. Therefore, our elders work deliberately with parents to ensure a child (before being baptized) is able to understand, articulate, and embrace the Gospel, believer's baptism, and church membership, and bears the fruit of regeneration. A child will not be baptized until his or her parents (if they are believers), the child's pastor(s), and elders together agree that the child is ready to be baptized. Then, upon a child's baptism, the members of Grace Community Church, under the loving care and oversight of the elders, will work together to disciple such children to grow in Christ and mature in the faith.

7. Can an unbaptized believer participate in the Lord's Supper at Grace Community Church?

All believers who are following Christ in repentance and faith, and are walking in obedience to Christ, are welcome to participate in the Lord's Supper at Grace Community Church. Preceding the administering of the elements in the Lord's Supper, we encourage one another to examine themselves, prayerfully confess one's sin, and repent in obedience to our Savior, Jesus Christ. Because baptism is command of Christ, and thus to be obeyed, we continually exhort every believer who has not yet been baptized to pursue baptism as soon as prudent and/or possible at Grace Community Church.

8. Who is permitted to baptize believers at Grace Community Church?

As we believe baptism is one of two ordinances given by Jesus to the church, to be administered in the church, we believe that pastors and elders who oversee the local church are to administer this ordinance and baptize believers. Consequently, the pastors and elders of Grace Community Church baptize believers at Grace Community Church.