

CHURCH @ CHURCH

# Baptism

Our vision is to 'REACH THE CITY, REACH THE WORLD' with the Gospel of Jesus.

CONNECT to God through trusting in Jesus' death on the cross for your sins, and connect to church.

GROW in your relationship with Jesus and others following him, especially through a Growth Group.

SERVE Jesus and others according to their needs, especially a Ministry Team.

This MINISTRY PAPER is designed to help your Growth Group leader encourage you as you take the step of baptism, or of having your child baptized.

## What can wash away my sin?

Washing is a part of everyday life. We wash dishes. We wash windows. We wash clothes. We wash the car. We wash the dog. And of course, we wash ourselves. We take a shower or a bath, to remove the dirt, to be clean.

The Bible says that there is another washing that we all need. It's washing not just of the body. It's a washing where water can't reach. The Bible says that we have a true self – a soul – which needs to be washed clean. Something more powerful than water is needed for this washing.

It's like in Shakespeare's play Macbeth. Lady Macbeth has talked her husband into killing the king. And when he's done the deed, she picks up one of the daggers and gets blood on her hands. Which from then on, becomes a symbol of her guilt. She keeps washing her hands. But the water can't reach her guilt. Water can't reach her soul.

John the Baptist says it's the same for all of us. And he knew a thing or two about washing. As the one who prepared the way for Jesus, he invited people to be baptised with water. But he was very clear that the water he used was only washing bodies. Only a symbol. A symbol of the real washing that Jesus would bring.

What has the power to wash souls clean? Jesus pouring out the Holy Spirit. What has the power to remove our guilt before God because of our sin? Jesus pouring out his blood.

As we sing when we gather at church:

*'Cause Jesus paid it all  
All to him I owe  
Sin had left a crimson stain  
He washed it white as snow*

*"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." – Matthew 3:11*

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the one who would bring the real washing – the washing of the Holy Spirit.

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." – Matthew 28:1-20*

Jesus tells his followers to go make followers in all nations, baptising them and teaching them to obey all that he has commanded. Our vision to 'Reach the City, Reach the World' is all about inviting others to follow Jesus with us.

*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. – Acts 2:36-41*

In this dramatic scene at Pentecost, the Apostles tell the crowd that they have blood on their hands. They have murdered the king, crucifying him. They are cut to the heart with guilt. But they are given a promise – a promise for them and their children.

Amazingly, the same blood that is on their hands is the blood that can remove their guilt. They step forward to have their bodies baptised with water to symbolise their trust in King Jesus' blood to wash their souls. They turn to live with the risen Jesus as their King. They receive forgiveness for their sins.

As followers of Jesus, we share in the promise of Acts 2. We share the same dual privilege. We get to raise kids as followers of Jesus. And we get to welcome people who join us in following Jesus. So we baptise kids of people who follow Jesus. And we baptise adults who follow Jesus. We have the great joy of celebrating both.

Baptism isn't magic or superstition or some sort of spiritual insurance policy. Baptism is a washing of water for followers of Jesus to symbolise the greater washing we are trusting in – the washing clean of our souls by the blood of Jesus.

## Questions for Everyone

Who is your Lord and Saviour?

Do you trust him in your whole life?

## Additional Questions for Adults

Do you come to be baptised trusting only in Jesus' saving death to wash away your sins?

As crucial to your new life following Jesus, do you promise in the strength of God's Spirit to be faithful in reading the Bible, in prayer, and in attendance at church, always seeking to grow and to serve as part of the church family here?

## Additional Questions for Parents

Do you bring [name] to be baptised as a witness of your desire and prayer that he/she will grow up to be a true follower of Jesus?

Do you promise to teach the word of God, the Bible, to [name]?

Do you promise to pray for [name] and to set him/her a godly example in life?

As a part of your godly example do you promise to be faithful in your attendance at church?

## To the congregation

Do you promise to support [name] in the promises they've made: and to pray for [name], to care for him/her in Christian community, to constantly remind him/her of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and be a godly example for him/her?

## GETTING CONNECTED

The first step in Baptism is trusting in Jesus. But it's not a step you take alone.

In Acts 2 we see those who stepped forward for baptism, stepping forward to follow Jesus together:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.- Acts 2:42*

Being connected with the Christian community you are being baptised into is an essential part of your baptism.

Getting connected has three simple next steps which are: Sign up to Elvanto, attend Connect Lunch or Dinner, and join a Growth Group.

# 1

## Signing up to Elvanto

Begin by becoming part of our online community, Elvanto. Elvanto is our key communication tool and is completely internal and secure. Talk with someone on the Connect Team about signing up. (You can also ask about ways to connect with us on Social Media).

# 2

## Attend a connect lunch or dinner

Once you've signed up to Elvanto we invite you to a Connect Lunch or Dinner where we outline what we believe and how we put it into practice.

We discuss what it means to connect with God personally and what it means to connect with each other as a church family. It's also a great opportunity to spend time getting to know some of our ministry team, as well as others new to our church.

# 3

## Join a Growth Group

At the Connect Lunch or Dinner we'll talk to you about joining a Growth Group - where we grow in community in small groups. Our Growth groups are groups of 6-12 people where we regularly open up the Bible, pray and share life together. At your baptism (or your child's baptism) your Growth Group will join you and be involved including praying for you.

## MORE RESOURCES

Your baptism is a celebration of Jesus; love and a great opportunity to invite family and friends to church to hear about Jesus. We may ask you to share your story of what God has done in your life – working through the 'Giving Your Testimony' Ministry Paper will help you prepare.

If your child is getting baptised we encourage you to work through the 'Raising kids to follow Jesus' Ministry Paper.

