**Policy and Procedures for Baptism**

1. General

Water baptism is the hallmark of one’s public witness of accepting Christ. It is the entry point in the Body of Christ and the fellowship of the saints and is necessary as part of one’s confession and identification with Christ. Baptism is reserved for those who have sincerely repented of their sins and confessed Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Water baptism represents the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord and reflects the crucifixion of the old man, his burial and our rising to walk in newness of life.

**2. Steps to Baptism**

The desire for baptism is the natural response to one’s heart having been impacted by the preaching and teaching of the Word. The general guidelines for those desiring water baptism are as follows:

1. The candidate must share their conviction and desire for baptism with the pastor or elders who will advise them of the next steps.
2. Candidates should undertake a period of study to prepare them for baptism. This may be given either by group or individual instruction. The candidate must have an understanding of the Plan of Salvation, who Jesus is, the purpose and significance of water baptism and what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ.
3. For children 12 and under, readiness for baptism is to be assessed by their class teacher and the child’s parents and recommendation made to the pastor or elders.
4. Parental approval is required for any candidate under age 18.
5. Once the candidate’s readiness is affirmed, a baptismal date will be set.

**3. Restrictions**

In the event that the Ministry is aware of besetting sins and circumstances that would reflect negatively on the witness of the Ministry, baptism will be postponed until the situation is resolved. Examples would be:

* Cohabitation – the resolution of which would be separation or legal marriage.
* Alcohol and drug addictions – the resolution of which would be evidence of deliverance, or enrollment in a detox treatment program.
* Out-of-wedlock siring or pregnancy – resolution would be postponement until post-delivery.

**4. Scheduling of Baptism**

The baptism date should be set taking into consideration the general order of services and monthly church calendar. Baptisms may be scheduled for any day of the week, but are generally scheduled for Sabbaths or Sundays. Sabbath baptisms will be conducted at the end of services. The candidate should be advised as to how to prepare for their baptism (what to wear and what to expect).

**5. Conducting the Service**

A suggested order of service for a baptismal service would be as follows:

* Call to order with singing of hymns or choruses
* Opening prayer
* Additional hymn or chorus
* Scripture and exhortation
* Opportunity for the candidate to share their confession and commitment to Christ
* Proceed to baptistry (officiants enter the pool first)
* Prayer of blessing
* Baptism
  + Candidate steps down into the pool.
  + Minister (addressing the candidate by name): Bro./Sis. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and was raised from the dead by the Father on the third day?”
  + Candidate’s response: I do (or yes).
  + Minister: Have you repented of your sins and do you confess Jesus as Savior and Lord?
  + Candidate’s response: I do (or yes).
  + Minister: In accordance with the confession of your faith and by the authority of the Word of God, I now baptize you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
  + The candidate then should be dipped (fully immersed) and assisted out of the pool.
  + Repeat until final candidate has been baptized.
* The elders are called to come and pray for the candidates to receive a filling of the Holy Spirit.
* The congregation comes forward to extend the right hand of fellowship to the candidates.

**7. Additional Procedures**

Candidates should be congratulated and baptism certificates given. Proper notation should be made in the official church record and a copy of the certificate placed on file.