

Concerning Baptism at CBC

Baptism is a New Covenant sacrament ordained by Christ as the initiatory sign and seal of fellowship with Him in His death and resurrection. It signifies our regeneration and new birth, our engrafting into Christ, the remission of our sins, and our giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life. It is a means of grace whereby the Holy Spirit imprints a seal upon the faith of the one baptized, a seal that testifies to the realities of the gospel that baptism signifies.

The only proper subjects of baptism are those who profess repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as the sole ground of their justification and who desire to obey Him as their Lord and Savior and who have given due consideration to the meaning of baptism, the costs of discipleship, and who are able to examine themselves for participation in the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is administered by the church by a properly appointed minister of the gospel as a public witness to a believer's profession of repentance, faith, and obedience and as public affirmation of his or her separation from the world and membership in the body of Christ. Consequently, baptism at CBC is always a public reception of the one being baptized into membership in our local body. Likewise, baptism is a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is to be done by full immersion in water except in unusual circumstances that may require another mode.

Q&A

Does Cornerstone baptize children?

We baptize everyone, regardless of age, who gives credible testimony to repentance toward God, faith in Jesus Christ alone for justification, and who desires to obey Him as their Lord and Savior. All those being baptized should enter into the waters having considered the meaning of baptism and the costs of discipleship and should be able to reasonably examine themselves in preparation for the Lord's Supper.

Do you assess a child's testimony differently than you assess an adult's?

In either case, we are seeking to discern genuine faith and credible signs of spiritual life. Because children may have difficulty communicating what they believe, it may be necessary to take more time to listen, ask questions, and provide direction; but this is also sometimes necessary when interacting with new or immature adult believers. While there may be differences in the way we interact with children, the content of the gospel does not change. This means that we will be assessing the same things in similar ways while taking into consideration the development and maturity of each person.

How old should my child be for baptism?

Given our understanding of baptism, we cannot give a minimum age. However, proper subjects for baptism should demonstrate credible signs of regeneration. Most importantly, this would include a reasonable ability to testify to faith in Christ alone for justification but will also include visible indications of love for Christ and a willingness to follow Him even when discipleship is costly. They should also have enough self-awareness to recognize their own sin and confess it in preparation for the Lord's Supper. Parents should not only be looking for these signs of life but should be instructing and encouraging their children to take hold of Christ for this life.

What process will you use to prepare children for baptism?

Though the church plays an essential role in disciple making, parents are given the *primary* role of discipling their children and bringing them up in the fear and admonition of our Lord. This means that parents should play the primary role of preparing their children for baptism. It is our desire that parents become well equipped to lead their children to Christ and grow in their willingness, ability, and confidence to do so. To help parents at CBC with this, we will provide instructional resources, training, and family counseling, where necessary, aimed at helping parents lead children to Christ and prepare them to give public testimony to Him in baptism.

Do children become members of Cornerstone when baptized?

Baptism at CBC is always a public reception into membership in our local body regardless of age. However, certain duties of membership require a demonstration of maturity; so while a child who is baptized is received into membership, these mature duties will only be expected as a child demonstrates reasonable growth and development, appropriate fitness, and/or completion of additional instruction.

What are the duties that require a demonstration of maturity?

The most obvious would be the leadership offices of the church, e.g. Elder and Ministry Director (Deacon); but any teaching or leading position (e.g. Sunday School, TE, VBS, etc.) will necessarily require some measure of spiritual maturity. The most common *shared* duties of membership that would require maturity would be the duties of affirming the appointment of Pastors, Elders, Ministry Directors, and for the approval of major decisions set before the church.

How will CBC determine or assess a youth's readiness for mature duties?

- In respect to the leadership offices of the church, any candidate should meet the qualifications laid out in Scripture and be tested and affirmed by the church. This process alone would necessitate a demonstration of widely recognized maturity and will naturally result in age and developmental restrictions.
- Similar qualifications, testing, and affirmation also apply to other teaching and leading positions which will necessitate recognized maturity and that will also naturally result in developmental restrictions.
- In respect to participation in the appointment of leaders, the approval of major decisions, or any other matters that require a vote, it is our expectation that a youth member should be ready to take on these responsibilities by the age of 18. However, we believe it would be important both to prepare our youth to step into these duties and affirm their readiness to do so. To accomplish this, we require youth members to complete a course of instruction before taking on these added responsibilities. Youth who demonstrate requisite maturity before 18 may complete the course of instruction and step into these duties sooner but not before the age of 16.

Why did you set the age range from 16 to 18?

We believe that it is in keeping with biblical wisdom to expect that youth will mature into adulthood and that it is prudent to give direction and set expectations to that end. There are some circumstances in the government of the church that must be ordered “by the light of nature and Christian prudence” (LBC, 1.6), and this is one of those circumstances. While the 16 to 18 range is admittedly somewhat arbitrary, it is in keeping with the norms and expectations of our culture. As a nation we grant youth the right to drive, along with the profound responsibilities driving entails, at the age of 16; and we grant the right to vote at 18. If a world that does not know Christ can expect an 18 year old to have the maturity to elect legislators and decide public policy, it seems even more reasonable to expect that an 18 year old who

professes Christ and who has been a member of the church would have the maturity to step into the adult duties of membership.

What process will you use to bring children into these mature membership duties?

While baptized youth at CBC will have had the added opportunity to receive instruction and be prepared for baptism as children and will have already met with elders to assess their testimony, the process for bringing them into mature membership will be the same as any adult desiring to come into membership at CBC. They will attend our membership class and then meet with elders to review their testimonies and reaffirm their covenant commitments.

What if a baptized youth is not ready or is unwilling to step into these adult duties by age 18?

There will always be the potential that circumstances in the life of a youth may necessitate additional patient instruction or that matters of planning on our end may cause delays, and these circumstances will need to be handled case by case. However, if a baptized youth member does not desire to step into these duties by age 18 or is unwilling to complete the course of instruction required, he or she will be removed from membership in a manner appropriate to the circumstances.

What if a youth member moves away for work or college before completing this course of instruction?

It would be our great desire to help any member, youth or adult, moving to another community to find a gospel-preaching church where he or she can become a member and come under its care; and we would expect that this would also be the desire and aim of any who would need to move away. Once a member finds a new church home, we would remove him or her from our membership and transfer care to the new church. Should a member not share this desire and aim after receiving counsel or exhortation, he or she would be removed in a manner appropriate to the circumstances.

Will children be subject to church discipline?

Church discipline properly refers to the whole work of providing discipling care to members and includes the ongoing work of mutual counsel and correction. This discipleship work is sometime referred to as "informal discipline." Formal discipline is only necessary when a member is refusing to listen to correction from a brother or sister in Christ concerning a clear matter of obedience to Christ and will initially involve one or two additional members. Only after a member has refused to listen even to these two or three is the church involved. The purpose of the church's involvement is to continue appealing to this one we love to listen and be restored to Christ.

Properly understood, church discipline is the loving pursuit of wandering members and, as such, should not be withheld from any who belong to the church regardless of age. However, the manner in which these things may take shape will depend greatly on the circumstances, including the maturity of the one being corrected. Great care and wisdom ought to be practiced in any case but especially in matters that involve youth. Since children remain under the authority of their parents, it would be our great desire to enthusiastically support parents in the discipleship of their children, and any formal discipline would necessarily involve them.

Should parents encourage their children to be baptized?

Parents should greatly desire to see their children embrace Christ and identify with Him in baptism and should labor diligently to instruct their children in the gospel, appealing to them to be reconciled to God through Christ and encouraging and, when appropriate, even exhorting them to faith and baptism. This should be done prudently before the Lord understanding that a child must personally desire Christ and baptism and must be reasonably able to count the costs of discipleship before entering the waters. As a rule, parents should not be the ones to arrange for the baptism of a child but should encourage and, if

necessary, help their child to initiate discussions with a pastor or elder. These steps of faith taken by a child will serve as expressions of their own heart's desire and as demonstrations of a willingness to publicly confess Christ.

Should children participate in the Lord's Supper?

Children should not participate in the Lord's Supper until they have been baptized. Once any believer has been baptized, he or she should joyfully participate in the Table being sure to examine him or herself before partaking.

How should I proceed if my child wants to be baptized?

You should greatly encourage your child toward this step of faith and obedience while joyfully taking the opportunity to engage him in discussions about the gospel and baptism. You are encouraged to use the resources we provide to guide your conversations in order to help your child prepare for discussions with an elder. [Resources listed here] If you are unsure of your own ability to lead your child or have questions, you are encouraged to seek help from a pastor or elder in this process. When you've worked through our guide with your child and he is able confess Christ and demonstrates a desire to follow Him, encourage him to share this desire with a pastor or elder.