Baptism at Cedar Ridge

What is baptism?

Baptism is an ancient practice that followers of Jesus have been carrying out since the very beginning of the church. In fact, baptism even predates Jesus. His cousin (John the Baptist) was baptizing people in the river Jordan before Jesus came on the scene (Mark 1:4-8), and Jesus himself was baptized by John (Mark 1:9-11).

Baptism is a simple ceremony in which the body is covered in water in some way. Early in Christian history, it seems a lot of water was used and people were probably immersed (John baptized in a big river) but over the years different traditions have evolved. Some still use a big pool (or even a river or ocean) to completely immerse the person being baptized. Some pour varying amounts of water from a jar onto the head. As practices of infant baptism or christening developed, a small mark of water was used on the forehead. At Cedar Ridge we practice pouring water on the head. We are not opposed to the other forms, but that is just the practice we employ.

What does baptism mean?

Baptism is one of the traditional "sacraments" of the church, which means it is "an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace." In other words, baptism is a symbol or a practical metaphor for something very important. The actual act (and the way it is done) is not so important; it is what it represents on the inside that matters. It symbolizes many things, and each Christian tradition tends to emphasize one or more of them. At Cedar Ridge we view it in the following way:

- **Baptism symbolizes repentance and forgiveness (Mark 1:4)**
  Repentance literally means changing our minds. It means rethinking; having our minds renewed and enlightened. It means taking on a new consciousness, and it is what Jesus called us to (Matthew 4:17). In this open state, we become aware of our brokenness, our mistakes, and where we have missed the mark in life. In this state, we are more open to God's love, and we can receive God's forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9). Baptism seems to have evolved from Jewish washing ceremonies, and there is an obvious symbolic cleansing element to the water. Baptism represents the continual washing away of the dark parts of our lives, and our conscious pursuit of the fresh start into which we are invited every day.
- **Baptism symbolizes death and resurrection**
  It is perhaps easier to see this metaphor in the "full immersion" form of baptism. When we go under the water, it is like being buried; when we come up out of the water, it is like coming back to life. The symbolism here is that we are united with Christ and mysteriously participate in both his death and life (Romans 6:3-4). We let go of an old way of life in which we separated ourselves from Christ (we die to that way of life), and we embrace a new way of living in which we experience the very life and Spirit of Christ empowering us (we are resurrected to a new kind life). Baptism illustrates that we are "new creations" (2 Corinthians 5: 16-20) with a new hope for now and forever.

- **Baptism represents our community with one another**
  We are baptized into a community (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). Somehow the water represents the ocean of unity in which we all swim. Jesus claimed we are all one as humanity, whether we see it yet or not, and baptism represents a surrender to and celebration of that reality. We are baptized into our local community (we celebrate our oneness with the people of Cedar Ridge). We are baptized into the church at large (we celebrate our oneness with all followers of Jesus). And we are baptized into the more mystical, universal community of God's family throughout time.

Who can get baptized at Cedar Ridge?

Everyone at Cedar Ridge is welcome and encouraged to be baptized. The only requirement is a desire and commitment to follow Jesus. Our practice is baptism for adults and younger people who can give their own consent and are making a conscious decision. This means that for people under 18 (in our youth and children ministries) wishing to get baptized, we include parents and guardians in the discussion. Also, we do not baptize anyone who expressly does not want to be baptized, even upon parental request.

We do not generally practice infant baptism at Cedar Ridge, preferring "child dedication." However, we greatly respect the tradition of infant baptism, and if this is important to you and your family, we encourage you to discuss this with a member of the pastoral staff.

How do I get baptized at Cedar Ridge?

Simply ask a member of pastoral staff or email us at info@crcc.org and we will arrange a meeting to discuss this with you. Twice a year we hold a "Community Sunday" service at which we do baptisms, and you will be scheduled for one of those dates that works for you. During the service, one of the pastors will invite you to the front and you will have an opportunity to share some words with the congregation about why you want to get baptized (this is optional). Then you will be asked to kneel, and you will be asked to respond to the following 3 questions (which correspond to the three symbols of baptism above):

1. Do you repent of living life on your terms and doing things your own way?
2. Do you now give yourself to God and choose to follow the way of Jesus?
3. Do you now choose to be part of the community of Christ, to love, accept and respect all others?

After you respond positively to each of these, the pastor will say: "Upon your confession of faith, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen." The pastor will then pour some water from a jug onto your head. This will trickle onto your clothes, so we ask everyone to have an "assistant" on hand to give you a towel. People will applaud at this point, and you will then be asked to stand again and the pastor will pray for you. After this, you can go back to your seat.

You are warmly encouraged to invite family and friends to the service and join us afterwards as our whole church enjoy a potluck lunch to celebrate the commitments (including baptism) from that day.