

NATIONAL BAPTISM WEEK

Ideas Guide

**There are lots of ways to make the most
of National Baptism Week for your church.
Here's a few ideas:**

Offer a Baptism Class / Information Session

Offer an opportunity for people to find out more about baptism in a small group or individual setting. You may even open it up to those who have been baptised but would like to be better equipped for talking about baptism with others. You might find the ***Taking the Plunge*** book and/or ***Count Me In*** brochure (available at crossover.org.au) to be useful resources.

Prayer (Gathered Worship)

Father, Son, Holy Spirit – all present and involved in Christ's own baptism – we thank you for this simple little ceremony that says so much.

It speaks of the complete washing away of our sins

It speaks of us being completely immersed in your love and grace

It speaks of dying to an old life and being raised to a new one full of promise

We thank you that you made this marker of entry into your kingdom so accessible. It's only the rich that can afford a lavish wedding. It's only the strong

who get a gold medal ceremony. But wherever there's a bit of water, and a willing heart, then even the poor and the weak – especially the poor and the weak – can celebrate becoming royal priests in your kingdom.

For some of us, our baptism was long ago. But we pause to remember and to thank you for the people who showed us your love and led us to you. As we think about the risks they took and the care they took so that we too could be included – we ask you to please shape us to be such people for others.

Lord, we would like to increasingly be a baptising church – as open to adopting and nurturing new disciples as you are. Train us to be a safe and helpful church for enquirers, for newcomers, for the young and the young-in-faith.

Lord, we know that baptisms are strangely contagious. As each one declares their need for you and their trust in you, it's a witness and encouragement to others, and rightly so. Keep us from being needlessly hesitant or half-hearted. Keep us from excluding anyone that you are wanting to include. Help us to remove stumbling-blocks from the way of people who would come to you.

And we pray for the new believers – both here among us and right across our movement. Baptism is not a finish line, it's a starting line, and we ask your blessing and protection on those taking early steps in discipleship and tentative steps in ministry. May they continue to be filled with your Spirit, and may a great many of them have the privilege of leading others to you in turn.

For you are the hope and light and life of the world, and we pray this for your glory, Amen.

Story / Group Reflection / Interview

Tell us about when you were baptised. What do you remember?

Who helped you and pointed you to Jesus? What did it cost them?

How can we be like that for others?

Kids / All Ages Talk

[You might like to consider using some visual aids when speaking to an all ages group. Perhaps having a bag or box with items or words that represent things we symbolically leave behind and things we take up in baptism and then taking things out and putting things in as you talk. Or having a clear container of water that you place things in and take things out of to visually represent what you are talking about.]

If you have been around church for a little while you may have heard people talk about baptism. You may have even been there when someone has been baptized!

Baptism let's everyone know you are saying your own Yes please! to God's invitation to completely belong to Him through Jesus. When we are baptized we are showing the world we are all in for Jesus. Even before Jesus was baptised baptism was about washing away the things that kept you away from God. It represents both giving up an old life (as you go underwater) and taking up new life (as you rise back up) and reminds us that Jesus died for us and He rose again making a way for new and everlasting life that begins now.

Our baptisms are all the way in the water because it is about being all in for Jesus.

When you go into the water it is a symbol of leaving behind things that can put distance between us and God and make him seem far away from us. For example we leave our selfishness and unkind words in the water at baptism. This doesn't mean we will never be selfish or unkind again but it does mean we want to live more and more the Jesus way. What might be some other things we leave behind as we go under the water at baptism? *[Invite responses, affirm those who respond regardless of what they say. While there might be answers that are not correct it is never wrong for people, especially kids to join in talking about Jesus. If this is not usual for your community of faith you may want a couple more examples to help get some responses going.]*

Being all in for Jesus is not just about what we give up. When we come out of the water it is a picture of taking up some new things as we say Yes to following Jesus with all our life.

Youth Talk

What is *adoption*? Why is it a big deal? Who is it a big deal for? (Orphan, family) God doesn't just want everyone out there to generally know that he loves them... ..but that he wants to adopt people into his family. (Why is that bigger news?)

And because He's loving, he doesn't just force people into his family (not a kidnapper). He invites.

And because this is such a big deal, we have a ceremony for those who say 'Yes please'.

If two people fall in love and one proposes, and the other says 'Yes' – what ceremony? (Wedding)

What's the ceremony we have for those who say Yes to God? Baptism

So each person gets to make their own choice of whether they want to belong to God through Jesus, or not. Your friends, and your parents, they can encourage you, but they can't decide for you. God wants *your* response.

That's why we wait for kids to be old enough to choose for themselves. When you're old enough to decide for yourself that you *don't* want to live God's way, and you *don't* want to be part of the church – instead, you can make the much better choice: to be baptised and say, "I *do* need Jesus, and I *do* want to know God as my Father, and I *do* want to be filled with his Spirit, and I *do* want to be part of his family."

So imagine you're an orphan, and you hear that there's a family that wants to adopt you. It's exciting, but it's a big step. You'd want to have a good think about just what life in that family will be like. But most of all, to find out what the parents are like. So what is God like? Can He be trusted to really love and care for you and help you grow? What's the evidence? And are you ready to say 'Yes please'?

Video Message – Baptism: Who's it for?

12m30s Message from Luke 14 by Andrew Turner vimeo.com/864298925

Baptism seems to be for the fervently religious. But what does Jesus say?

Bible Study / Series: Baptism in Luke–Acts

Luke 3:1–23	A remarkable mass-movement is starting, and powerful things are stirring. What stands out to you the most?
Luke 7:29–30	What difference can a ceremony make down the track? Why?
Acts 1:5 and 2:4	Why do you think being ‘filled with’ and ‘baptised in’ (seemingly opposite imagery) are both used to describe receiving the Holy Spirit? In what ways are they both apt?
Acts 2:36–41	Why do you think water baptism was still a key part of the response to Peter’s speech?
Acts 8:9–17	Does the Holy Spirit automatically fill people at their baptism? What does this mean for us and our practice of baptism?
Acts 8:26–38	In what ways is the baptism of the Ethiopian official unusual? What precedents does it set?
Acts 9:10–19	Why was Saul’s first step after the scales fell from his eyes to get baptised? Is baptism still a first step for new believers in our practice?
Acts 10:1–48	What is different about this water baptism, with relation to the baptism in the Spirit?
Acts 16:13–15	Why would a devout ‘worshiper of God’ (and family) still need to be baptised?
Acts 18:23–19:7	Why is ‘John’s baptism’ incomplete – such that the Ephesian disciples were dipped a second time? What else do we ask candidates at baptism apart from ‘Do you repent of your sin?’
Conclusion	Across this study, what have you learned or been reminded of that is of most significance to you? And what are you going to do about it? Are there others you should share this with?

