

Welcome to
Emmanuel
Baptist Church



Emmanuel Baptist Church Eastleigh

Desborough Road Eastleigh Hampshire SO50 5LZ

emmanuel-eastleigh.org

Introduction to Water Baptism

Emmanuel Baptist Church began its ministry in Eastleigh in 1933. Then as now it existed to present the 'faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints'. It is a member of the Old Baptist Union, a group of evangelical Baptist churches founded in 1880.

As a Baptist church we believe that being baptised in water is an essential element of Christian life, being a sacrament that Jesus Himself bestowed on the church. Therefore everyone who is considering being baptised should read this booklet prayerfully and carefully, to ensure familiarity with the basis upon which water baptism is undertaken in Emmanuel. Keep it in a safe place for future reference.

As a prelude to baptism all prospective candidates must attend Baptismal Classes, covering the biblical basis for baptism more deeply than can be done in this booklet.

Should you wish to be baptised based on what you read on the following pages, let me or one of our church officers know as soon as possible. Your application will be discussed by us and, if appropriate, we will arrange a baptismal service soon after that.



Charlie Keerle (Pastor)

About Being Baptised

Water baptism is a public declaration of the decision a person has made to become a Christian. No one will ever become a Christian by being baptised. The word baptise simply means to dip, which is important as total momentary immersion in water reflects three elements of the transition the candidate has made into eternal life (see page 9).

We do not baptise children, as they are not old enough to make such a life-forming decision for themselves. Instead we will dedicate them, thanking God for their life, praying for them and their family, and sharing vows before God.

We appreciate that some parents have had their children christened as an expression of their desire for them to grow up in the faith. If someone who has been christened decides as an adult to follow Christ, they should be baptised rejoicing that their parents' prayer has been answered.

The Constitution of Emmanuel requires everyone who wishes to be received into full membership of the church to be baptised (see the church's Constitution booklet). However, being baptised does not automatically make the candidate a member of the church in that sense.

We would strongly encourage candidates to apply for membership because we believe it carries great benefits for both them and the church, giving them a part to play in the governance of Emmanuel. Please ask for a copy of our Membership booklet.

The Need For Baptism

Many people wonder why there is a need for water baptism. Scripture gives us four primary reasons for it and makes it clear that God expects all Christians to be baptised in water:

- 1 Jesus did it** - Matthew 3:13-17.
Although Jesus did not need to be baptised for repentance, having done no wrong, He did it to 'fulfil all righteousness'. It was his debut into public ministry and the first time His relationship with God was made public. It stirred God to audibly proclaim, 'This is my Son, whom I love'. It offered a prophetic insight into His future ministry of cleansing people from their sin, and His subsequent death and resurrection.
- 2 Jesus commanded it** - Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16.
In these passages, Jesus showed that baptism goes hand-in-glove with salvation and discipleship. Carrying this line further, Paul gave baptism in water the same significance for Christians that circumcision had had for the Jews (Colossians 2:11).
- 3 The Apostles commanded it, too** - Acts 2:38 and 10:48.
Although these references are only to Peter, the leader of the early church, there is an abundance of evidence that other apostles including Philip (Acts 8:38) and Paul (Acts 19:3-5) also taught the necessity of baptism, some of which is listed in the next section.
- 4 Early church examples endorse it.**
Throughout the New Testament there are various records of

people being baptised after becoming Christians. For example:

- The 3000 people who became Christians on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41).
- The people Philip preached to in Samaria (Acts 8:12).
- The Ethiopian Chancellor of the Exchequer (Acts 8:38).
- Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:18).
- The first Gentile converts in Cornelius' house (Acts 10:47).
- Lydia of Thyatira (Acts 16:15).
- The Philippian prison officer and his family (Acts 16:33).
- Crispus, his family and the Corinthian converts (Acts 18:8).
- The Ephesian Christians taught by Paul (Acts 19:5).

Laying On Of Hands

In the New Testament baptised believers received the 'laying on of hands', a powerful symbol of the passing on of a blessing or commission.

This took place for the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17 & 19:6), the giving of spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 1:6), commissioning for service (Acts 13:3) and healing (Acts 28:8) among other reasons.

Likewise we lay hands and pray for each candidate following their baptism - to send them on their spiritual journey in the power of God.

The Meaning Of Baptism

1 **New Life** - Romans 6:1-4 and Colossians 2:11-12 .

Candidates are 'buried' in the water signifying that they have 'died' to the old way of living they had before becoming a believer.

On emerging from the water they are further signifying that they are rising from the 'dead' into a new life.

2 **Spiritual Cleansing** - 1 Peter 3:21 and Acts 22:16.

In being totally soaked by the water candidates are demonstrating that salvation 'washes' every part of the old sin-stained nature.

On emerging from the water they are 'clean', in recognition of the quality of God's total forgiveness of all of their sins.

3 **Following Jesus** - Galatians 3:26-29, 1 Peter 3:21 and Romans 8:11.

Candidates are publicly identifying themselves with Jesus, not just because He was baptised, but by 'buried' in the water the candidate emulates His death and burial.

Of course Jesus subsequently rose from the grave in victory over death. Candidates rising from the water re-enact that resurrection, which has made eternal life available to all who believe in Him.

Practical Preparations

Your clothes. Wear clean casual clothes that can get wet without colours running, shrinkage, etc. Trousers or jeans and a tee-shirt are fine, skirts are not as they tend to float on the water's surface! As light coloured clothes become see-through when wet, candidates must wear a swimming costume or discreet clothes underneath. On your feet wear shoes you can easily take off before going into the baptistry.

Make sure you have a full change of clothes with you, along with a large towel. Put your dry clothes in the changing room and hand your towel to a chosen friend; they will hand it to you when you get out of the water. Remove glasses and all non-water proof jewellery, watches etc. and give them to your towel holder for safe keeping.

Your testimony. As part of the ceremony, you must give a brief testimony of salvation, lasting about 3 or 4 minutes. This should include clear statements of what led you to become a Christian, what your relationship with God means to you now and that this is a life-long commitment. Because you will be nervous it's a good idea to write it down. There is space to write it at the back of this book.

A favourite song. As your baptism reaches completion the congregation will sing a church song appropriate to your experience. You will need to choose this in advance and let the pastor know before the service.

The sequence of events. You will be reserved a seat or place at the front of the church. The service will start with a short programme of songs and a message which will end with an introduction to baptism.

You will then be called to give your testimony. When all the candidates have done this, the pastor and/or elder will enter the baptistry and candidates will be called one at a time. At this point members of the congregation will be invited to read or recite words of blessing from Scripture for you, which will be recorded on your Baptismal Certificate.

When all these have been given you will be invited to enter the water and you will be baptised. For elderly candidates and candidates with disabilities, who may find access to the baptistry difficult, alternative arrangements for immersion can be made on an individual basis.

Once you are clear of the water, your towel will be given to you. Wrap it around you and go straight to the changing room to dry and change. Once changed, return to your seat where you will be prayed for with the laying on of hands.

Remember

If you have any questions, doubts or points to raise about your baptism, please contact the pastor or any church officer as soon as possible before the event. We will be only too pleased to help.

Your Testimony...

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