

Q. When should a person be baptized? As an adult or as a baby?

In some church backgrounds, it is taught that the baptism of babies ‘doesn’t count.’ There are some denominations that, in fact, will insist on re-baptizing believers as adults, when the person can make the choice for him- or herself. It makes logical sense. How can a baby make a promise to follow Jesus? Understand what it is to accept and grow into a relationship with God? There is a whole movement of Christian history – reflected today in particular Christian denominations – that reacted against infant baptism as superstitious and inappropriate church teaching.

And yet, in the Anglican tradition (as well as the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, United, and Presbyterian traditions), we continue to baptize babies. We continue to baptize babies, and we teach that there is One Baptism, that regardless of where, when, or under what circumstances you were baptized, that baptism is valid. Why? When it makes no logical sense?

Because our relationship with God actually isn’t about logical sense. Baptism is not about our understanding enough to be ‘ready’ for a relationship with God. It isn’t a graduation ceremony, where we have achieved certain requirements that validate us for the Body of Christ. Baptism is first, foremost, and *ultimately* about grace, about gift. Specifically God’s gift to us, the gift of God’s self, God’s love, God’s relationship. No strings attached. It is about a human recognition of the covenant that God makes with each and every one of us, of God’s faithfulness to us, whether or not we deserve it, whether or not we understand it. We continue to practice infant baptism because in this sacrament (an outward sign of an invisible gift) all of us are reminded most clearly of God’s unconditional love and acceptance of us. Although this baby has never done a single thing to *earn* a place in the community of people who are committed to walking together in the way of Jesus, they are welcomed, accepted, validated, valued, and joined to us, nonetheless.

Today we are incredibly blessed in being able to celebrate both an adult baptism, as well as the baptism of several infants. Tanya Schleich, our youth and nursery leader, has made a significant decision in choosing baptism, choosing to share her gifts and her life with the Christian community, for herself as an adult. We give thanks that as she takes this step herself, she also is providing care and leadership to many of our young people at St. George’s, showing them by example why our faith choices matter. And we are also so very blessed to welcome new children, new lives, into our journey and our community. We ask for God’s blessing today on each of them, that they might grow into the full measure of courage, spirit, joy and wonder that is our life of faith.