

## **An Invitation to a Conversation:**

### **Should baptism by immersion be a requirement for church membership?**

**This is a *chairo*s moment; i.e., a pivotal, decisive moment in the life of our church.**

- This is an excellent opportunity to explore an issue that has caused division in the church for centuries.
- This is a chance for us, in a safe and friendly environment, to practice being church—doing good biblical study, honestly addressing questions and concerns, praying together, and making God-honoring decisions.
- Through it we will grow, becoming ever more an expression of the eternal Kingdom of God in this place and time.
- Our success in this adventure will set the tone for other discussions and decision making that will come down the road.

**This is a live issue: It is not contrived. It is not a surreptitious push to “change the church” or to “water down the Bible”.**

- It is a reflection of the world in which we live—changing times, changing culture, and the changing nature of church.
- Our congregation is about half and half member and non-member. A significant percentage of our congregation comes from traditions other than Baptist. The question of baptism as a requirement for membership arises weekly in discussions.

**What this is NOT: a denial or dismissal of BELIEVER’S BAPTISM.**

- Believer’s baptism is biblical. Jesus was baptized and He instructed disciples to be baptized. Believer’s baptism was clearly the practice of the early church.
- It is a time-honored practice throughout the history of Christianity and will continue to be practiced at WRBC.

**What this IS: an invitation to a conversation, to open dialogue, study, and decision making related to the practices of this church.**

#### **THE PATH FORWARD**

**1. We will schedule a number of sessions designed to examine the Scripture and address pertinent questions so that the congregation is prepared for informed decision-making.**

#### **The tentative schedule:**

March 15	Present the issue to the congregation
March 22	Study guides and related material will be made available for personal study. (Easter events, spring break, and mission trip will preclude study sessions for the next three weeks).
April 19	9:00 am Address the topic in sermon

	10:45 am discussion session
April 20, 22, 27, 29	6:30 pm LIFE group options
April 26	10:45 am discussion session
May 3	4:00 pm discussion session
May 6	6:30 discussion session

**Other sessions in May and June may be scheduled based on interest.**

June 14 Proposed date to act on the recommendation

**Some of the questions we will address include:**

- *What does the Bible teach about baptism?*
- *What is the history of the practice of baptism?*
- *What is the theology of baptism?*
- *What are the differences between infant and believer's baptism?*
- *Will making the change (or not making the change) violate Scripture, dilute the faith, and/or hurt the church?*
- *How does making the change (or not making the change) further the Kingdom of God through us in this place?*

**Any additional questions you would like addressed should be submitted in writing and placed in the basket in the Gathering Space.**

**2. We will make prayer an important part of this journey. We will**

- *Pray in good conscience for God to guide us into the course of action that pleases Him, even if it is not the position that we prefer.*
- *Pray for each other, both for those with whom we agree and for those with whom we do not agree.*
- *Pray that we will grow from this experience, attaining to the unity of faith and of the fullness of the Son of God, to be a mature people, measuring up to the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*
- *Pray that this discussion will not derail us from other important tasks to which God has called us.*
- *Pray that He might use the experience to equip us to deal with other issues that will arise in the future.*

**3. We will trust the congregation to make a decision that is right and good for the church and for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

This is a direct reflection of our trust in the Lordship of Jesus Christ as He leads through His Spirit and through the light of Scripture.

**4. We will come out on the other side still walking together and committed to the church to which we believe God has called us. We will celebrate the good things He has done in and through us!**

