

## Lent Series 2024: Sacrament

### Questions from 25 February 2024

#### Questions on the administration on Sacraments

Is the water filtered? What if someone drowns during baptism?

*The water we use at HVMC is not filtered. If someone is drowning during baptism, we pray that someone close by knows how to administer CPR 😊. If someone drowns during their baptism, it would be a memorable and tragic event, but it is not 'special' in the sense that it would still be an ordinary death and an ordinary baptism (this question is similar to the question on someone dying during baptism).*

What if the person being baptised dies during it?

*See above.*

Can anyone baptize anyone? Must it be a priest (for the catholics) or a pastor?

*Under normal circumstances, in the Methodist tradition, only ordained Diaconal Ministers, Deacons and Elders who are all pastors are allowed to perform the sacrament of baptism. Apart from other reasons, this is also to preserve the sanctity of the rite and also maintain good order in the church. Other traditions may hold different positions on this.*

Does a person need to be ordained to baptise someone? The Great Commission suggests everyone should make disciples and baptise them

*See above.*

Can anyone baptise another person as long as you have the right intentions and both are willing parties?

*See above.*

Must we be baptized by holy water ? What is holy water?

*Methodists do not use holy water for baptism. We give thanks for the water but the water remains normal water and does not become holy water.*

The medium for the baptism is water. What about other liquids?

*Only water should be used for baptism.*

Is it okay to not feel anything different before and after baptism?

*Yes, but you should feel wet immediately after baptism 😊. From the ritual of the United Methodist Church, "In all services of the baptismal covenant, water should be used generously as a living sign of the abundance of God's grace, cleansing, and life-giving power."*

Immersion symbolises the death, burial, and resurrection. What about pouring and sprinkling?

*[Below is extracted from the United Methodist Book of Worship]*

*Each [mode] is a form of washing which symbolises the washing away of sin (Acts 2:38 ; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21). Being totally buried in water and*

*raised from it is also a powerful symbol of our burial and resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:3–5; Colossians 2:12) and of being born anew of water and the Spirit (John 3:3–5; Titus 3:5). Pouring or sprinkling water upon the candidate's head also signifies God's pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:9–10; Luke 3:21–22; Acts 2:38 ; 19:1–7).*

### **Questions on the infant & child baptism**

*To be addressed further in the sermon on 10 Mar*

Can you be confirmed by immersion if you were baptised as a young child by sprinkling?

*No. These are two different rites. In the rite of confirmation, "Water may be used in ways that cannot be interpreted as baptism."*

How does the Intent for baptism come in when children are involved with the decision made by parents?

*The intention is on the part of the one administering the sacraments. That there must be a real intention to act as a minister of Christ, or to do what Christ instituted the sacraments to effect.*

Why is only Methodist that have infant baptism?

*Many denominations baptise infants/babies. Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc.*

Why do we baptise children and then require them to be baptised again when they're older?

Does it mean that the earlier baptism doesn't really count?

*No. See below.*

If I was baptised as an infant, is there a need for a second baptism as an adult?

*No. See below.*

Why do we believe in infant / child baptism?

*We baptise children because we believe that Jesus commanded it and it extends God's grace to children. Persons who are baptised as children are not baptised again. They go through the rite of Confirmation which in the Methodist tradition is not a sacrament.*

*[Below is extracted from "By Water and the Spirit by General Board of Discipleship"]  
Within the Methodist tradition, baptism has long been a subject of much concern, even controversy. John Wesley retained the sacramental theology which he received from his Anglican heritage. He taught that in baptism a child was cleansed of the guilt of original sin, initiated into the covenant with God, admitted into the Church, made an heir of the divine kingdom, and spiritually born anew. He said that while baptism was neither essential to nor sufficient for salvation, it was the "ordinary means" that God designated for applying the benefits of the work of Christ in human lives.*

*On the other hand, although he affirmed the regenerating grace of infant baptism, he also insisted upon the necessity of adult conversion for those who have fallen from grace. A person who matures into moral accountability must respond to God's grace in repentance and faith. Without personal decision and commitment to Christ, the baptismal gift is rendered ineffective.*

How do we reconcile the act of baptism with the personal knowledge of Christ - Children, new believers

See above.

Do you think it's better for us give our children a choice when it comes to being baptised? Shouldn't baptism be a personal choice made by our children when they are of age to make a mature decision?

See above.

*[Below is extracted from the "Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church in Singapore"]  
Because the redeeming love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ extends to all persons, and because Jesus explicitly included the children in His kingdom, the pastor(s) of each church shall earnestly exhort all Christian parents or guardians to present their children to the Lord in Baptism at an early age. Before Baptism is administered, the pastor(s) shall diligently instruct the parents or guardians regarding the meanings of this Sacrament and the vows which they assume. It is expected of parents or guardians who present their children for Baptism that they shall use all diligence in bringing them up in conformity to the Word of God and in the fellowship of the Church. It is required that one or both parents or guardians shall be members of a Christian church or that sponsors who are members shall assume the baptismal vows. They shall be admonished of this obligation and earnestly exhorted to faithfulness therein. At the time of Baptism they shall be informed that the church with its church school programme will aid them in the Christian nurture of their children.*

*The pastor(s) of the church shall, at the time of administering the Sacrament of Baptism, furnish the parents or guardians of the child who is baptised with a Certificate of Baptism, which shall also clearly state that the child is now enrolled as a preparatory member in the Methodist Church in Singapore. The pastor(s) shall also admonish members of the congregation of their responsibility for the Christian nurture of the child.*

What if we decide not to do child baptism, because we want our kids to make their own decisions.

*[Below is extracted from "By Water and the Spirit by General Board of Discipleship"]  
We respect the sincerity of parents who choose not to have their infants/children baptised, but we acknowledge that these views do not coincide with the Wesleyan understanding of the nature of the sacrament. The Methodist Church does not accept either the idea that only believer's baptism is valid or the notion that the baptism of infants magically imparts salvation apart from active personal faith.*

Why is it that many churches insist that one have to go through the baptism class lessons before one can be baptised? In that respect, is baby baptism valid?

*This is so that the candidate understands the meaning of baptism and membership in the church. There are only 3 conditions for a valid baptism. (1) Water is used (2) administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with (3) the minister's intention.*

My child was baptised as a child in the methodist church. What happens when she grows up and decides to move from methodist to another church that does not recognise her infant baptism?

*The new church may elect to baptise your child again and this generally only happens in Baptist or some independent churches (see above on the denominations which recognise and practise infant/child baptism). Historically, Baptists came out of the Anabaptist tradition which literally means “re-baptizers.”*

### **Questions on rebaptism**

Do people who have baptised but backslided and moved away from the faith need to be baptised again should they come back to the faith?

*No.*

After being cleansed at baptism do Christians need to be cleansed again from time to time? If so, what form does that take.

*According to John Wesley’s sermon, “Means of Grace,” the ordinary Means of grace where God might convey to persons preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace are prayer, searching the Scriptures, and receiving the Lord’s Supper.*

*In addition, I might add that the Bible suggests that we ought to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16) regularly.*

### **Questions on baptism and death**

If someone nearing death, says the Sinner's Prayer, then passes away, will that count as baptism?

*No. But that’s a different question on whether one is saved before being baptised.*

What happens if one decides not to be baptised and dies?

*Nothing particular happens that we can accurately point to. If the person has confessed Jesus as his Lord and Saviour (i.e. is a Christian), there should be the assurance of salvation. However, one should account for the refusal to be baptised which is in clear disobedience to Jesus’ commands.*

Is it a superstition that you should only be baptised just before death so that you will be cleansed and soul get into heaven? So better to delay baptism, sin all your life, and then get baptised ?

*Some in the church believed this to be so, e.g. Emperor Constatine. However, there is no biblical evidence of this and the opposite is true in the New Testament. Persons who repented and believed in the Gospel were baptised immediately.*

### **Questions on baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Is the ‘baptism of the holy spirit’ a sacrament?

*No.*

Why isnt baptism in/ with the holy spirit valid (with Methodist ? it happened / widely accepted @ Pentecost! )

*Baptism of the Holy Spirit is valid and recognised by the Methodist tradition but baptism by water and baptism of the Holy Spirit are connected but different, but can often occur at the same time. Christians are baptised with both.*

*In the Methodist tradition, after baptism, the pastor immediately lays his/her hands on the newly baptised person, and the following words are offered, "The Holy Spirit work within you, that being born through water and the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen." These words invokes the work of the Holy Spirit upon the newly baptised person. Similar words are also offered in the rite of Confirmation.*

If you receive the Holy Spirit at baptism, is it still necessary to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit separately/subsequently?

*No. There is little evidence in the Bible for a Christian to "seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit." On the flip side, there are references to "One Baptism" (Eph 4:5) which suggests that baptism by water and the spirit can occur at the same time and is in a sense, "One baptism."*

### **Questions on Holy Communion and Baptism**

*To be addressed further in the sermon on 24 Mar*

Unlike some other churches, we practise an open table where Holy Communion is taken by baptised and non-baptised members as well as children who may not have accepted Christ into their lives yet. Why.

*Churches in the Trinity Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Singapore hold to the idea that all who love and Lord Jesus and seek communion with him can receive Holy Communion.*

*[Extracted from "HOLY COMMUNION (TRAC BOM SUMMARY)" written in 2019 for General Conference Pastors Retreat]*

*Wesley viewed Holy Communion as a "Converting Ordinance." In his journal entry dated June 27, 1740, he pointed out that many could trace the beginning of their conversion to God at the Lord's Supper:*

*For many now present know, the very beginning of your conversion to God (perhaps, in some, the first deep conviction) was wrought at the Lord's Supper. Now, one single instance of this kind overthrows the whole assertion. (The Works of John Wesley, Volume 19, 158, Journal entry for June 27, 1740.)*

*He also wrote of how the disciples in the Upper Room were not exactly believers when Jesus celebrated the very first communion with them.*

*Our Lord commanded those very men who were then unconverted, who had not yet received the Holy Ghost, who (in the full sense of the word) were not believers, to do this "in remembrance of" him. Here the precept is clear. And to these he delivered the elements with his own hands.*

Wesley, in his journal entry on the following day (June 28, 1740), further stated that the Holy Communion is "a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities."

Does our open table, encourage a delay in baptism, by suggesting it's not "necessary"?

*I sincerely hope not but I have not considered this question in this way before. I certainly hope that people do not submit themselves for baptism for the sole purpose of receiving the*

*Lord's Supper. If one desires communion with the Lord (and all the Saints) at the table, then one should logically also desire to be obedient to Jesus' command to be baptised and be joined with Christ and his body.*

**Other Questions to be answered**

If one has the opportunity to visit the Jordon river and would baptise there. Thoughts on doing it again at Jordan River.

Pastor Jeremy, you mentioned in your e.g -there could family objection, out of respect for other family members. If baptism causes division in family, do you have advice to navigate this?

If circumcision is Jewish's baptism and assuming Jesus was circumcised, why did He have to be baptized again by John the Baptist in the river Jordan again? When was water baptism adopted by the Jews?

*Answered during the conversations.*

How does the work of being sacrament to one another strengthen our faith in God?

*Answered during the conversations.*