

Calvary Protestant Evangelical Free Church

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CALVARY CHRONICLE

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What Does the Bible Say About Baptism?

A pastor performed a simple wedding ceremony in his study. He went immediately with the new husband to prepare for the groom's baptism. The preacher was overjoyed that the young man was professing his commitment to Christ on the same day he professed his love for his wife. As the pastor and candidate entered the baptistry at the beginning of the service, the pastor was caught up in the spiritual euphoria of the moment. He led the candidate to the proper place, lifted his hand toward heaven and said, "Happy and holy is the hour when a man and a woman are united in the bonds of matrimony - and also in baptism! In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen!" Each wedding anniversary will remind this man of the remarkable day in which he sealed his commitment to Christ and to his bride.

Baptism, though, is not as meaningful for everyone. The prominence of baptism in Christian worship has gradually eroded.

Since the time of Christ, believers have participated in baptism, sometimes with great fanfare and exuberance, and sometimes with solemnity and reverence. Regardless of style, though, the visual and emotional appeal of this confessional act is at the very heart of who we are as followers of Christ. Baptism has significance for individual believers, for the church, and even for nonbelievers.

Before I lay out five of the most important New Testament texts to consider, let me acknowledge at the outset that godly evangelical pastors, scholars, churches, and seminaries stand on both sides of this question. The issues are many, and the arguments often complex, and I have great respect for many dear infant-baptist brothers and sisters. However, we indeed go deeper, and also do not overlook the obvious. Consider five straight forward biblical texts on baptism that any Christian view of baptism cannot ignore.

Mark 1:5

All the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to [John] and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Without exception in the New Testament, baptism is tied to repentance and faith in the baptizee. John's baptism, the precursor to Christian baptism, was explicitly, repeatedly, and irreducibly tied to repentance. *"They were baptized by [John] in the river Jordan, confessing their sins"* (Matthew 3:6). John said, *"I baptize you with water for repentance"* (Matthew 3:11). In the Gospels and Acts, John's baptism is summarized as "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; also Acts 13:24, 19:4). Then, in telling the story of the early church, Acts repeatedly ties Christian baptism to repentance and faith:

- *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins"* (Acts 2:38).
- *"Those who received his word were baptized"* (Acts 2:41).
- *"When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip"* (Acts 8:12-13).

Acts 18:8

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

Infant-baptists often point to the "household baptisms" mentioned in Acts 16:33, 18:8, and 1 Corinthians 1:16, and argue that any infants in these households would have been baptized.

(continued on next page)

Keep in mind that nowhere in Scripture is there any instance of an infant's being baptized. The "household baptisms" (mentioned in Acts 16:15, 33 and 1 Corinthians 1:16) are exceptions to this only if one assumes that the household included infants. But, in fact, Luke steers us away from this assumption, for example in the case of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:32, by saying that Paul first **"spoke the word of the Lord . . . to all who were in [the jailer's] house,"** and then baptized them.

In Acts 18:8, Luke clarifies immediately, in the ensuing sentence, that simply being in the newly Christian household was not enough for baptism. Belief in Jesus was prerequisite: ***"Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized"*** (Acts 18:8).

The believer-baptist argument goes deeper than such instances in the Gospels and Acts, but we often begin here. And not just in the early-church narratives, which can be thorny in terms of prescription, but also in the Epistles. Four anchor texts in the apostolic letters bind baptism and faith with a clarity and simplicity that is unmatched in the infant-baptist argument.

Galatians 3:26-27

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Paul assumes that those who have been baptized and those who have saving faith are the same group. Faith and baptism belong together in the church's practice and in the individual Christian's experience. Those who evidence saving faith should be baptized. And those who have been baptized have given expression to saving faith.

No allowance or provision is made here, or elsewhere, for some who would have been baptized apart from a profession of faith, in anticipation of faith to come.

Colossians 2:11-12

In [Christ] you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

The mention of circumcision is important because one of the main arguments for infant-baptists is that as circumcision was administered to every male born into God's first-covenant people, so baptism should be applied to every child (male and female) born into believing families of God's new-covenant people, the church. However, this is not what Colossians 2, or any other New Testament text, says about circumcision.

Here "the circumcision of Christ" refers to his being cut off, at the cross, for our sins, and the "circumcision made

without hands," which Paul applies to every believer, is spiritual circumcision, that is, new birth as commentator Doug Moo notes, "the connections . . . are between spiritual circumcision and baptism."

Of these new-covenant people who are born again, circumcised in heart, Paul expects the new-covenant inaugural rite of water baptism to have been applied. The new-covenant recipients of baptism, as the counterpart to old-covenant circumcision, are those who have new birth (not mere natural birth), a spiritual circumcision which does not happen apart from faith. Colossians 2:11-12, like Galatians 3:26-27, presumes active and professed faith in all baptized, not just their parents.

Romans 6:3-4

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

As in Colossians 2, the baptized are those who have been buried into Jesus's death and raised to new life in him. Not only does the image suggest immersion, rather than sprinkling or pouring, but more importantly, "newness of life" testifies to new birth and its effects, not mere first birth.

An "old self," into which we were born (Ephesians 2:1-3), has been crucified (Romans 6:6) or put off (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:9). And Paul says such is true of "all of us," all the baptized. We all now "walk in newness of life," not in the oldness of our first birth. The infant-baptist argument that presumes faith in the newborn does not do justice to the litany of New Testament texts about conversion, putting off an old man, and walking in newness of life.

Plausible or Biblical?

Beyond the instances in the narratives, and the didactic words of the apostles tying baptism to faith, we also make our argument on theological and covenantal grounds. But there is something fitting about not moving on to those arguments too quickly. Essential to believers baptism position is doing justice to the demonstrable teaching of the New Testament.

The best infant-baptist voices typically provide admirably plausible, reasonable, and consistent arguments. The key issue for us as Christians, however, should not be whether the argument is plausible and consistent, but whether it is taught by the actual text of Scripture.

To the more theological and covenantal arguments, we dare not pass too quickly over the plain, stubborn, obvious readings of the New Testaments texts. Whatever your tradition, a good argument for the nature and application of Christian baptism should not ignore or minimize what the Bible actually says, including these five important texts.

CLOCKS GO AHEAD

Daylight Saving Time begins **Sunday, March 8th, at 2:00 a.m.**

Not all clocks are autonomous - some clocks still need to be changed manually. In the spring the clocks are moved forward (spring ahead) one hour. Do this Saturday evening or first thing Sunday morning. We wouldn't want you to miss Sunday School or the worship service.



SPRING FLING (Easter Fun Day)

Saturday, April 4th 10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

For children age 3-11

(children under 6 must be accompanied by an adult)

Activities: games, obstacle course, crafts, face painting, egg hunt, edible sand art, jelly bean guess, prizes, refreshments, and special presentation of the Resurrection story.

APRIL SENIORS LUNCHEON

Note change of date - to be held Tuesday, April 21st

We invite all our Seniors to the next luncheon to be held **Tuesday, April 21st**. As always, the luncheons start promptly at 12:00 noon.

On the menu is Virginia ham, macaroni and cheese, vegetable, and a sweet dessert. Pastor Lucchesi will be giving a message and committee is looking into a guest speaker.

Please let us know you are coming by either signing the sign-up sheet at the church or call the church office at 516-223-4070.



Pictured left is Matthew who was assisting Ralph during the February luncheon. Matthew helped prepare the meal in the kitchen, and also set-up the food on the buffet table.

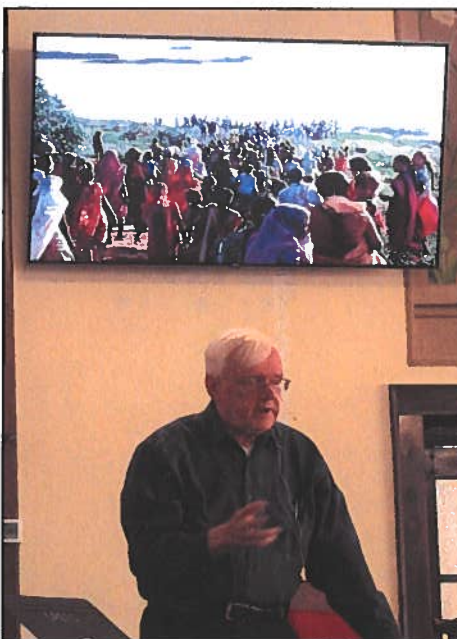
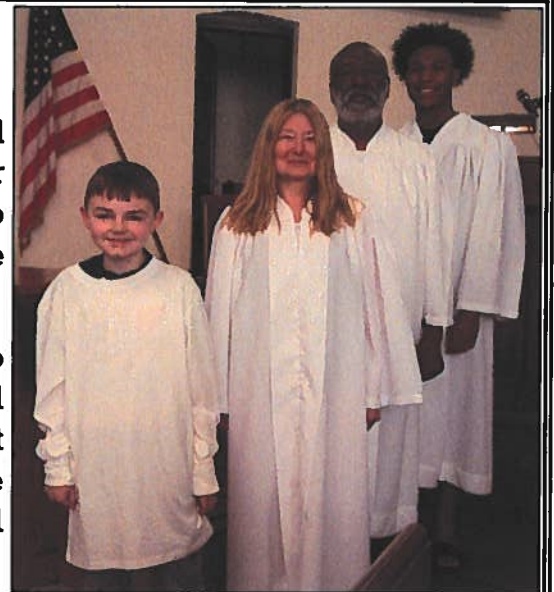
Helping to serve dessert were Patti (lady in red) and Dee (Barry's cousin) who was visiting from South Carolina.



Baptism Celebration

On **Sunday, February 23rd**, Calvary held a baptismal celebration during the morning worship service. Four in our church family were filled with joy and ready to be baptized: **Aaron Nehring, Lois Smith, Eugene Lloyd and Fitz Alcindor** (pictured left to right).

Baptism is a public confession of a commitment to Christ, considered part of a Christian's spiritual journey. Each participant witnessed and testified that they are a believer and follower of Christ. A couple even noted that it was the love and mercy of the Lord that helped them through a difficult time.



Elder Tom presented the spiritual message referencing from the Scriptures: Matthew 28:16-20, Romans 6:3-6, and Matthew 3:13-17. He highlighted the significant points of Baptism: chosen, obey, commitment, testify, and symbol of unity.

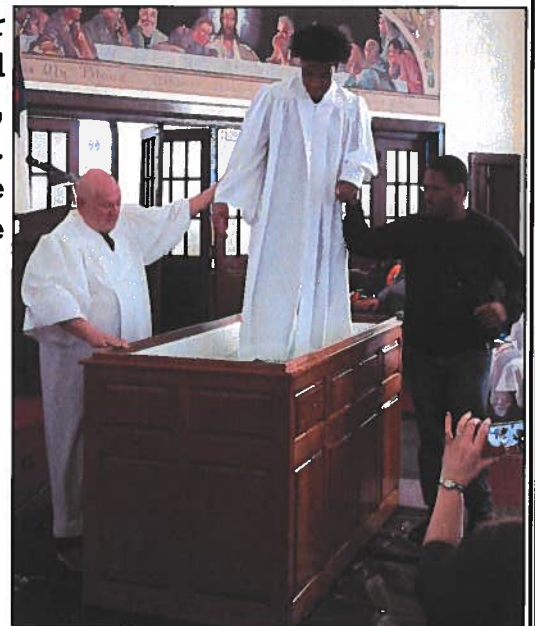
During his message Tom spoke of a time he experienced while he and his wife Peg were serving in India. While attending a large gathering where the message of God was being presented, 147 people came to know the Lord that day. Soon afterwards a baptism service was organized for those 147 people. They had to travel quite a distance (some going 15 miles) to get to the river where they were all baptized. A photo was taken of the large crowd as they headed toward the water - photo was shown on the video monitor. Tom was so deeply blessed by that experience he

had to share it with the congregation. It was a time he will never forget.

After the message, Pastor Lucchesi brought each of our honorees forward and baptized **Fitz, Lois, Aaron, and Eugene**. After each one the congregation sang the Doxology -

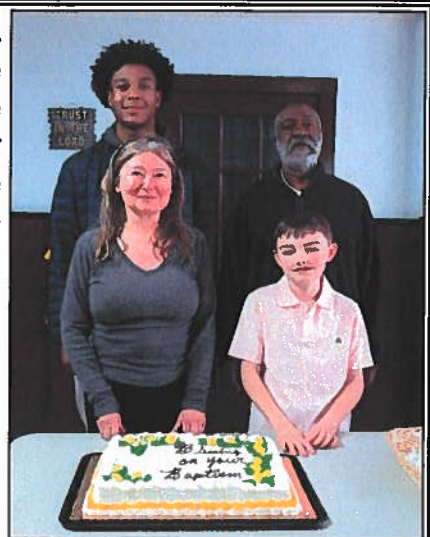
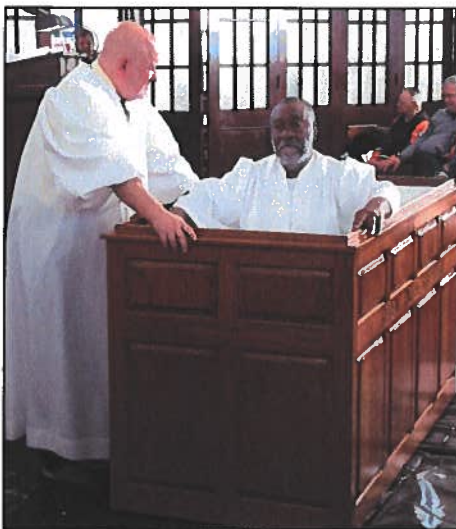
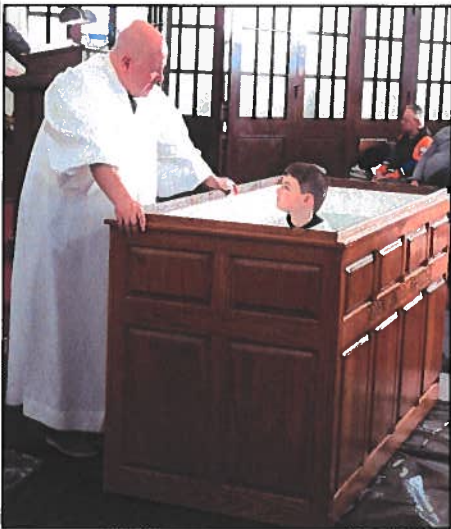


*Praise God from whom
all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures
here below;
Praise Him above,
ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son,
and Holy Ghost.*



Family and friends of our honorees and the church family watched with such compassion, awe, and exuberance. You could hear the "Amens" and "Hallelujahs" throughout the sanctuary. Some were emotional and wiped tears from their eyes. Even the younger children were so fascinated by the experience they sat on the edge of their seats. What a great example these four showed to everyone in the auditorium.

Pastor Lucchesi finished the ceremony by referencing Acts 2:41: *"And the Lord added to His numbers this day."*



After the service the celebration continued downstairs with refreshments.

It was a special day at Calvary, where you felt the love of God and Holy Spirit in the church.

May God bless Fitz, Lois, Aaron, and Eugene!

Congratulations to Jeovanni Nembhard!

On Tuesday, February 11th, our country was blessed to have a fine young man and lover of Christ become a citizen of the United States.

Congratulations Jeo!



APRIL EVENTS

Sunday April 5 Palm Sunday

Friday April 10 Good Friday Service at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday April 12 Resurrection/ Easter Sunday

Saturday & Sunday April 25 & 26 Missions Conference

More details on these events will be printed in the Sunday bulletin and in the April newsletter.

Calvary's Stamp Ministry

Calvary collects postage stamps for the Alliance Stamp Ministry in Florida. Please save the stamps from your envelopes by trimming a 1/4" to 1/3" of paper around the stamp, then bring them to the church and place them in the designated basket. The income from the sale of the stamps is used to support preparation, publication, and distribution of a Spanish language curriculum for churches and Sunday Schools in Latin America, Spain, and even in the U.S.

For further information, speak to Mary Jo Dapice.

So save your stamps to save souls!

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Baldwin, NY 11510

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BIRTHDAYS

MARCH

4th Susan Deedy Mahoney
7th Natalie Heneghan
8th Gisele Sandoval
14th Danny Forbes Breen
15th Christina Mandato
16th Patti Senita
17th David Fazzino
18th Lucas Nehring
18th Laura Nicolich
18th Emilyn Porter
19th Evelyn Sangster-Barnes
21st Lois Smith
22nd Melinda Jones
22nd Karen Senita
23rd Elijah Toussaint
23rd Brant Waldvogel
24th Bill Chalavoutis
24th Michael Nicolich (Jr.)
25th Larry Kulla
29th Tom Corcoran
30th Carmine Dapice
30th Bonnie Rose

APRIL

3rd Abbie Wong
5th Samantha Seymour
7th Debbie Porter
13th Howard Brockway
14th Leah Nicolich
15th Barbara Johnson
16th Barbara Grant
17th Ree Kelting
19th Ken Hults
20th Rose Nembhard
21st Mary Jo Dapice
21st Joe Fazzino
22nd Maryann Brockway
22nd Sotar Lloyd
24th Carter Miller
24th Rosemary Rotolo
27th Karen Linhart

**Happy
Birthday!**

ANNIVERSARIES

MARCH

17th Joe & Thalia Waldvogel
27th Cecil & Debbie Porter
30th Paul & Rose Nembhard

APRIL

12th Greg & Sue (Deedy) Mahoney
26th Charles & Evelyn Barnes

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT GEESE: Researchers have discovered some interesting truths about geese.

1. They fly in a "V" formation because it takes 71% less energy compared to flying solo. So, as in church, people need to stick together!
2. The lead goose has the difficult job of breaking the wind barrier, so they rotate leadership. So, let's share the hard jobs at church!
3. Geese honk as they fly. If one drops out and breaks the efficiency equation, the others honk encouragement to the leader. In church, let's honk some encouraging words!
4. If a goose is hurt in flight, two others accompany it to the ground and give help. In church, let's take care of each other!