

Dear Friends at CBC,

A number of years ago now, the General Baptist Association, the North American Baptists and the Conservative Baptists began to look at their requirements for membership in their local churches. Led by a passionate charge by Dr. John Piper, these associations among others wondered why Baptists felt the need to punish those who had been baptized as adult believers through non-immersion methods. The discussions around this topic through the years were not about immersion being right or wrong. Baptists as a group have largely been identified with the mode of immersion for as long as they have held that name. But historically all Baptist spring out of the Anabaptist movement and in that history other forms of baptism were used.

A few things need to be cleared up before we continue.

- we are only talking about post -conversion baptism and NOT infant or child baptisms done on behalf of families or based on Covenant Theology.
- the indication of Scripture that all people of any age must first recognize their sinfulness, then their lostness, then their need for salvation and then accept Jesus Christ as their substitutionary peace offering is not in question. Baptists still affirm that an individual must first place their faith in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and THEN be baptized. No reversal of this order is at play in the changes that are suggested at the end of this discussion.
- no church is being asked by their denomination or association to change their personal requirements for baptism. Those are still left to individual churches to decide based on the overall Statement of Faith.

What is being asked for churches to reconsider is the ban on

allowing other adults who were baptized in one of the other Anabaptist traditions (pouring or effusion) to be included as members of local Baptist churches. These individuals were believers first and then were baptized according to an Anabaptist tradition that was favored by whatever church they were associated with. These baptisms were as significant to the individual being baptized as any immersion was to others.

It is also important to point out, that in every case I am aware of personally, there is no desire on the part of these poured or effused believers to change the culture of the Baptist church they want to associate with. In other words, even though their own baptism was extremely meaningful and important to them, they have no wish to see the church conform to their mode of baptism. Instead, they are happy to be part of a Baptist church where immersion is the accepted mode of baptism. In fact, many of the people worshipping at our church over the years have seen their spouses, children and other family members baptized through immersion and they believe that to be the way to baptize moving forward in a congregation. These non-immersed believers are not subversive in any way, but fully supportive of the church they love and attend.

So why do we bar them from being members with us? That is the question many Baptist Organizations have asked themselves over the last years. And the answer now by all these Baptist groups is that each church is free to invite those other “believer baptized” persons to be members of their church. A number of churches in our BC association have already taken this step, and as your Lead Pastor I am suggesting we extend this invitation to our folk as well.

The suggestions to our bylaws would be as follows:

- Article 1 – Membership 2.a

Currently reads “upon confession of faith in Christ and baptism by immersion” will be changed to “upon confession of faith in Christ and baptism by immersion through Chilliwack Baptist Church.”

Article 1 – Membership 2.b

Currently reads “by letter from another Baptist or Evangelical church of like faith and practice” will be changed to “of like faith and practice, including any other modes of believer's baptism.”

Article 1 – Membership 2.c

Currently reads “by testimony of Christian experience” will be changed to read “by testimony of Christian experience and a subsequent believer's baptism.”

These changes will allow supportive, encouraging, helpful attendees of CBC who have experienced believer's baptism but who were not immersed to be equal partners and supporters of CBC moving forward. The Pastors and Board of CBC believe this is the right time to act and make these changes.

Any comments or questions feel free to write or speak to me (Pastor Matt) or any of the pastors.

In Christian love,
Matt