



NewHope Baptist Church

Baptism & Membership Training

Introduction

Welcome to NewHope's Baptism and Membership online training. We're thrilled that you are exploring this step in your journey as a follower of Jesus and we look forward to welcoming you into membership at NewHope.

There are five short modules to the online training course. Modules one to four talk about receiving believer's baptism at NewHope and the final module is about the exciting step of joining NewHope as a member. These sessions will help you prepare both spiritually and practically for your next step of commitment.

If you are preparing for believer's baptism at NewHope, please engage with all five modules including the reflection exercises. This will give you an opportunity to think through your commitment, explore the Biblical teaching, and deepen your understanding.

If you have been baptised already on your faith journey and you are preparing to join NewHope as a member, please spend time with all five modules and use the reflection exercises only where they are applicable to your situation. While some of the practical details will not apply to you, it is important that you understand NewHope's practice of believer's baptism and – as a member – that you embrace our commitment to it.

The training videos are short and the whole online course should not take you very long to complete. When you have finished the course, follow the instructions at the end of this web page and connect with a NewHope Pastor at your earliest convenience.

We look forward to supporting your baptism and membership journey and serving the mission of Jesus side-by-side.



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Module 1 - True life through Jesus

The followers of Jesus believe that He has reconciled us to God through forgiveness of sin. 2nd Corinthians 5:18-20 says: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them". We believe that our brokenness has separated us from God since Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Jesus came to reconcile us back to God through forgiveness and restore the relationship God always intended us to have with him when he created us.

Jesus' followers believe that his death on the cross is an act of incredible grace that makes this new relationship with God possible - Ephesians 1:7 says: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins"

The resurrection of Jesus is a victory over death and evil for all of creation. We accept this gift of gracious love, forgiveness and life by faith, which means we believe it, we trust in God's love before we can see it!

Following Jesus isn't about living up to a moral code to earn love it's instead about accepting a free gift of forgiveness and eternal life from him and then living life as a response to this amazing gift.

As we believe, God fills us with his Holy Spirit so we can live this new life with power. We are given an amazing gift of life from Jesus and that is why he says in John 10:10 - *"...I have come so that they may have life and life to the full"*. We have found true life, life as God intended for us, through Jesus.

Reflections Exercises

Key words: grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, sin, faith, eternal life, cross, resurrection, Spirit

Scriptures

- Romans 5:8
- 1 Timothy 2:5
- 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
- Ephesians 1:7; 2:4-9

Answer some questions

- What is most important to you in these bible verses?
- Have you experienced Jesus' forgiveness in your life through accepting his death on the cross for you? What did this decision mean to you? Has it changed you in any way?
- Does this module prompt any questions for you?



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Module 2 - Ok but why be baptised?

There are two main reasons why you might consider baptism: 1) To obey Jesus' commands - He says: "believe and be baptised"; and 2) to replicate your life being united to His death and resurrection for you.

It's not really important to NewHope that you 'tick the box' of some kind of 'church initiation process' – this is about your Journey with the Living God, and it should be done as a response to God as you allow God to change your heart, rather than some kind of 'religious requirement'. The New Testament speaks of Jesus himself being baptised as a statement of obedience to God and in Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus calls his followers to make disciples and to baptise them! So, baptism is first of all, an act of obedience to Jesus command to his followers and an act of following in his example

Secondly baptism is a physical replication of Jesus' death and resurrection. Romans 6:4 says that "just as Christ was buried in baptism, we too are buried into a place where there is no life" – underwater you simply can't survive! It's a symbol of dying, going under the ground even, and dying to our old way of life where we used to follow our own plan and only listened to ourselves. Then, in the same way as Christ was resurrected to defeat death and offer His followers new life – eternal life – we come up out of the water to symbolise this resurrection and the gift of true life He has given us. Then, as we said in our first module, as followers of Jesus, we walk into true life, living in response to this gift of reconciliation God has given and living to honour God with our lives.

Baptism is not a mechanism for forgiveness or salvation. The bible is clear in Ephesians 2:8 that it is by a commitment of faith alone that we are forgiven and nothing else. Baptism does not save us but acts as a symbol of our faith. Just like a wedding ring does not make someone married it simply acts as a sign of their commitment to marriage. So therefore, we often say, baptism is the outward sign of the inward decision you have already made to follow Jesus and accept His forgiveness.

Reflection Exercises

Scriptures:

- Matthew 28:19-20
- Romans 6: 1-14
- Romans 10:10
- Ephesians 2:8

Answer some questions

- What is most significant for you in these bible verses?
- In your own words why would someone choose to be baptised?
- Does this module prompt any questions for you?



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Module 3 - How wet will I get and does an infant baptism count?

Baptism is practiced in different ways in different Christian traditions. At NewHope we practice what is called “believer’s baptism”, which is by full immersion in water.

There are two reasons why we practice full immersion. The first reason is because baptism symbolises our unity to the death and resurrection of Jesus and therefore full immersion under-water best replicates this act of Jesus. Secondly it seems everyone in the New Testament including Jesus was baptised in this same way of full immersion.

The other important aspect of how we practice baptism at NewHope is expressed in the phrase ‘believer’s baptism’. We recognise that it is by someone’s personal decision to place their faith in Jesus that forgiveness and new life is received. Believer’s baptism is a symbol of that personal commitment to follow Jesus as ‘the Lord’.

In some Christian traditions infant baptism is practiced. This is a decision of the parents and an act of their faith. We do not practice infant baptism at NewHope, instead we perform Parent-Child Dedications in our worship services to pray for God’s blessing on parent’s and their child and to commit as a community to support these parents in their raising of this child.

NewHope recognises other traditions. If you were baptised as a baby and then declared your faith in Jesus at confirmation in another Christian church we do not ask you to repeat or forsake what was meaningful and important to you. But you might decide to receive believer’s baptism as well. For some people their childhood experience holds no real value, for others who deeply appreciate the Christian nurture of parents and their previous faith community, believer’s baptism is a moment of renewal and personal affirmation of a continuing faith commitment.

When you are baptised you are baptised into Jesus Christ and into his body – the community of believers called the church. When you are baptised at NewHope you become a member of this church.

Reflection Exercises:

Scriptures

- Matthew 3:16
- Acts 8:38-39
- Acts 2:41

Answer some questions

- What stands out to you in these bible verses?
- Were you baptised or dedicated as a child? Have you witnessed a baptism before? What was that experience like?
- Does this module prompt any questions for you?



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Module 4 - Nuts and bolts of baptism at NewHope

Now, there's just a few practicalities we'd like to talk through to help make your baptism happen. Usually we baptise people in a worship service at NewHope and people share a 2-3 minute testimony of their story of God's work in their lives and their reason for being baptised. Below you can download and read a few pointers on preparing and sharing your testimony with others. It is a powerful thing to share with others what God is doing in your life and it may even convince someone else to follow Jesus as well! At NewHope we love to simply share stories and God's work in our lives so that we can be encouraged by all that He is doing.

If you are worried about sharing your testimony or have other concerns about your baptism please speak to a pastor who will follow up with you once you complete your application form. We want to remove any barriers we can for your baptism to make it a great experience for you.

Your pastor, group leader or a significant mentor will be the person to baptise you. We encourage you to involve someone who has been important in leading or challenging you in your faith in Jesus and will continue to do so. The person who baptises you must be a baptised follower of Jesus and a part of NewHope.

When we baptise people at NewHope it's our joy to welcome them into membership of our church. We do this because we see this being a part of the practice of believers in the New Testament - first they believed, then they were baptised, then they joined the community of believers.

In the final module of this online training we will discuss what an exciting step it is to join the community of NewHope as a member.

Reflection Exercises:

Scriptures

- Matthew 5:16
- Acts 16: 30-31
- Acts 22:16

[Read the guide on preparing and sharing your testimony](#)

Answer some questions

- Are you ready to receive believer's baptism? Why?
- Who would you like to have attend your baptism? Why?
- Start to work on your testimony.



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Module 5 - The exciting step of membership at NewHope

Members are the 'moral owners' of NewHope. When we meet together in formal members meetings, we have a delegation of authority from Jesus Christ, and we hold the power to make the most important decisions that affect NewHope's culture and our shared future.

There are four major areas of decision making:

1. Who will lead us? (Who will be our Senior Pastor & the members of Church Council?)
2. Where we are going? (What is our vision and our plan?)
3. How will we use our resources (specifically our finances and our properties)?
4. What 'rules' will govern us (only a members meeting can change the constitution)?

It would be possible to organise the church in such a way that only a few people would make these major decisions and everyone else would simply follow. But our Baptist approach believes this highest level of authority should be held by all of us as we discern God's direction and exercise faith together. Members assemble and take responsibility for the present health, future capacity and missional effectiveness of NewHope. Taking the time to listen, learn, share and pray together about the activities and plans of NewHope strengthens the bonds of community and the boldness of our mission. We are much stronger together.

Not only are NewHope members, the 'moral owners' of the church, we are also 'owned' by Christ and by each other. In the words of Paul the Apostle: "we are members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (on screen Eph 3:6)

NewHope is a 'body' not a 'club'. In a club the members expect to get benefits for membership. In a body the 'members' belong to each other and expect to contribute value to the whole. Members do not derive personal gain from 'owning' the work and vision of NewHope, rather we are better positioned to serve the mission of God in community. By participating you give courage and support to others. Together we flourish!

There are three things that are expected of Members of the body.

1. First is discipleship. Most importantly, we ask our members, and everyone, to follow Jesus in the power of the Spirit, on mission, in community and through the disciplines of Bible, prayer and giving. This empowers us to fulfill our mission of Loving God, loving others and serving the world.
2. Second is support. We ask our members to support NewHope with their time, their skills and their finances. We ask you to help build up other believers and to advance NewHope's vision.
3. Third is governance. We ask our members to attend members meetings and contribute to NewHope's well being.

As you consider your membership commitment, spend some time getting to know NewHope. We are a local church operating multiple social enterprises and growing hundreds of Communities of Hope. Our members can't possibly know everything, but it is important to have a high level understanding as you take up your responsibilities as a member. So take



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some time to explore the website, read the latest vision document, grab a copy of Pastor Allan's book "Following Jesus", and make yourself aware of NewHope's constitution. There are some links below to help you explore and learn.

Now you are ready to complete the application form and catch-up with a NewHope pastor who can sponsor your journey. Thanks for engaging in this online training. May God bless you as you Follow Jesus with us here at NewHope.