

Church at Lake Mead

Child Water Baptism Policy

Effective June 2026

The earliest believers modeled baptism on the Jewish ritual of immersion as a physical expression of inner transformation. John, who baptized Jesus, sent people away because he was unconvinced as to their sincerity – Matthew 3:8. They were welcome to return if they brought fruit of their repentance. The association between disciple-making and water baptism is clear in Matthew 28:19-20. We do not baptize people because they have learned a lot about Jesus and the Christian life. Baptism is not a progress reward. It is a confession of belief in and a commitment to Jesus as King and master of one's life. The younger a baptism candidate, the more difficult it is to argue that their commitment has faced adult level testing. The rate at which church youth lose or abandon their faith in the first year of college is testament to this reality. Various sources, for example, Lifeway Research, place this at between 50 and 88%).

It is evident in the Scriptures that people being baptized were adults, not children. But in the Jewish faith of the 1st Century, a child became a responsible adult at 12 for girls and 13 for boys. This meant they could take their place as adult worshippers in the Temple or local Synagogue. This rite of passage was formal, and a child was well prepared through instruction and mentoring for the transition to spiritual adulthood. In a good many gospel preaching churches, we have long lost the concept of a spiritual rite of passage or any form of catechism. Water baptism as an event or ritual without a carefully managed preparatory journey, while special, sincere, and meaningful, can be detrimental to the long-term spiritual well-being of a person not yet an adult.

Following robust discussion and theological reflection, the elders at the Church at Lake Mead have set the minimum age for baptism at 10. Age is not the only metric that indicates a young person is ready for water baptism. In addition to age, other considerations typically include the views of believing parents or guardians, as well as recommendations from pastoral and other staff. Christian parents are encouraged, in partnership with the children's ministry leader, to prepare their children appropriately, not just to be baptized, but to encounter Jesus for themselves. The church can and will provide resources, including age-appropriate classes and age-specific groups, in that partnership. In the end, the home is the best place for a pre-teen to be prepared for a life of being a disciple.

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