

Session Four

To Change or Not

Objectives

1. Build empathy for differing positions on rebaptism.
2. Help individuals discover how their opinions about rebaptism have changed or stayed the same.
3. Give feedback on the Conditions of Membership.
(Note: Some individuals may wish to continue the discerning process.)

Materials

1. *Sing a New Song* hymnal
2. *Baptismal Stories to Consider* activity sheet (page 18)
3. Pens, pencils, or markers
4. Copies of *Ask the Question* activity sheet from session two (page 11)
5. Make four signs from definitions: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Personal Experience

Gathering

- Spend time thanking the group for the work it has done and the spirit in which it has met.
- Sing together *NS 44*, “Seek Ye First.”
- Offer a prayer for God’s continued presence and for our ability to recognize God’s voice.

Gleaning and Growing

- Put the four signs so that everyone in the group can see them. Have individuals take turns reading aloud the five baptismal stories from the activity sheet (page 18). At the end of each story, stop and discuss how scripture, tradition, reason, and/or personal experience played a part in the story. The group quickly may recognize personal experience as a strong influence in all these stories; challenge members to look for the presence of other influences. Then allow a couple of minutes to write responses on the activity sheet. After hearing all five stories, ask those who are willing to share their written thoughts and feelings. This can be done as a whole group or in small groups.

SCRIPTURE: TO FORM BELIEFS BASED ON YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES

TRADITION: TO FORM BELIEFS BASED ON WHAT THE CHURCH HAS DONE IN THE PAST

REASON: TO FORM BELIEFS BASED ON WISE THINKING

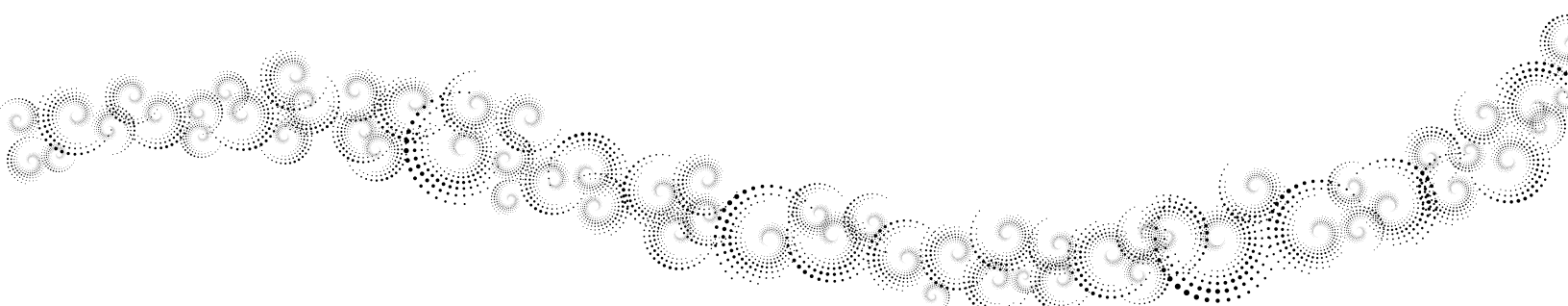
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: TO FORM BELIEFS BASED ON WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN YOUR LIFE

TRANSITION QUESTION

Do you feel ready to give feedback to the First Presidency on Conditions of Membership, or do you feel the need to continue discerning?

Going

- Ask participants again to fill out *Ask the Question* activity sheet (page 11) from session two. Some will be eager to submit it as feedback for the First Presidency. Others may not feel ready and will want further discernment. Please validate either feeling. (Individuals who want to continue discerning should be directed to the *For Further Study* (page 3) recommendations in the introduction.) Collect the feedback forms from those who choose to turn them in. Send them to the First Presidency. (See the introduction (page 3) for directions on where to send them.)
- Ask the group to stand in a circle, join hands, and offer sentence prayers—a blessing for leaders and members of the church in discerning God’s guidance about baptismal practices in Community of Christ. (Have those who wish to pass, squeeze the hand of the person standing next to them.) The facilitator may then close the group by offering a prayer of gratitude for the group and a blessing for each participant.



Baptismal Stories to Consider

BAPTISMAL STORY #1

When I was younger I was baptized into another church. It was a powerful experience for me, but then I met my friend, Cathy, and she introduced me to Community of Christ. I love this church and think a lot about becoming a member. But I worry that if I am rebaptized it will be as if my first baptism had no meaning. I can't do that.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS? WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS?

BAPTISMAL STORY #2

I don't remember my first baptism; it happened when I was a baby. The minister poured water over my head. When I decided to join Community of Christ, I looked forward to baptism by immersion because it was my decision now—not my parents'.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS? WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS?

BAPTISMAL STORY #3

Both sides of my family have been Community of Christ members for five generations. I'm so proud of that. I remember feeling excited when I asked my grandmother to baptize me after she was ordained a priest. I felt her connection with God as she lowered me into the water. I'm really afraid that if we stop rebaptism we will become like every other church because Community of Christ priesthood won't have baptized some of our members.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS? WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS?

BAPTISMAL STORY #4

I was baptized once and became a disciple of Jesus. I don't understand why I have to be baptized again. My covenant was to Jesus Christ—not to the church.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS? WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS?

BAPTISMAL STORY #5

I was baptized once and became a disciple of Jesus, but in Community of Christ I found a new relationship with Jesus Christ—a more powerful one. I am excited to be rebaptized because it beautifully represents my new covenant.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS? WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS?