

Welcome to this baptism service. Of course, this is a sacred moment in the life of Mitzi. It a step of **obedience** as a follower of Jesus. Baptism is a visible way of **confessing** Jesus as Savior and revealing one's **dedication** to Him as Lord.

When an individual is baptized, it is also important for the Body of Christ as we bear witness. Baptism represents the **participation** of a believer in the family of God. Baptism celebrates our common life in Christ!

On one hand, there is no merit inherent in the act of baptism. As Gary Thomas writes, "*The holiness God wants is a holiness rooted in Christ's death and resurrection, a holiness that changes our hearts, not just our actions.*" (**Seeking the Face of God**, Harvest House, 1999, 62)

Yet the physical act of baptism gives the believer an opportunity to document and portray God's work of rescue, redemption, and regeneration. Believer's baptism declares that one has answered the two questions: "*To whom does my life belong?*" and "*By whose power am I living?*"

Why do we practice **immersion**? Enterin water, going under, and coming up from the water displays the **death, burial, and resurrection** of Jesus.

But it is more than mere **portrayal**. This act declares reason five for being baptized: **identification** with the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:4-6,16).

In the NT era baptism was a familiar ritual. As the Body of Christ grew, baptism became a crucial, identifiable marker that one had become a Christ follower. Before Mitzi shares her spiritual journey with us, let's look at two personal stories from Scripture.

- **Hagar's story – Genesis 16:1-5**

Hagar was a slave to Sarah, Abraham's wife. Because Sarah could not conceive, she gave Hagar to her husband to be a surrogate. When Hagar became pregnant, bitterness grew between her and Sarah. Then, having fled in fear of her mistress, Hagar encountered the Angel of the Lord, who comforted her and confirmed she was carrying the child, Ishmael. In that moment, Hagar called God "El Roi" – "the God who sees me" (v.13).

This is significant. We struggle to "be seen"; to be known, wanted, loved. Yet our guilt and shame complicate this struggle. We often turn to human or harmful efforts to resolve our dilemma. Even religion is an attempt to perform rites and rituals acceptably in order to be approved by God.

But our deep need is to be fully seen and known by God! God has seen us so significantly that He sent Jesus to die for us, that we might be restored to relationship with Him. "*There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12)

- **Paul's story – Philippians 3:10-14**

This passage reveals Paul's rejection of personal accomplishments in view of God's rescuing grace. Paul longed to know Christ deeply – he was even prepared for the painful part of being conformed to Christ. Paul longed for resurrection power. His story? I "*press on to take hold*" (v.12a) or "*press on toward the goal to win the prize*" (v.14a). But both expressions include **God's role** in this: "*Jesus took hold of me*" (v.12b); "*God has called me*" (v.14b).

In baptism we testify to the death of our old unfruitful life, and a resurrection to new spiritual life, all by God's grace! Baptism is not a spiritual destination, as if the physical act could somehow count in our favor. Rather, it is all about what God has done for us in Christ. Through baptism we tell the world that we are trusting in Him for salvation.

### **Let's listen to Mitzi's testimony**

Mitzi has shared with us how God has written Himself into her story. Have you welcomed Jesus Christ into your life? Perhaps God seems distant or even absent, in your opinion. Listen to [Tim Keller's helpful explanation](#).

The Good News is that came to this sin-cursed earth to die, be buried, and rise again. By faith in His rescuing work, we can experience a life transformed. Baptism celebrates this. And baptism becomes a launch point for ongoing growth and discovery of the **exchanged life** (Galatians 2:20). In their song [I Am Crucified With Christ](#), Phillips, Craig, and Dean sing...

*When I look back on what I thought was living, I'm amazed at the price I choose to pay  
And to think I ignored what really mattered, because I thought the sacrifice would be too great  
But when I finally reached the point of giving in, I found the cross was calling even then  
And even though it took dying to survive, I've never felt so much alive  
For I am crucified with Christ and yet I live, not I but Christ that lives within me  
His cross will never ask for more than I can give, for it's not my strength but His  
There's no greater sacrifice, for I am crucified with Christ and yet I live*

We are entering the Easter season when we celebrate the sacrifice and victory of Jesus. Please visit [Digging Deeper](#) to download the devotional, [Words From The Cross](#), to use between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Please join us for the baptism at the Silva's home (12564 251<sup>st</sup> Street).