



**Baptism by full immersion in water** is a common practice within the Baptist movement.

## BAPTIST CHURCHES

Baptist Churches take their name from the belief that the initiation ritual of *Baptism* is a voluntary declaration of faith in and commitment to Christianity. The movement grew out of a reform within Christianity in the 16th century. The *Christian Bible* is the key holy book of the movement, which shares the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity (described on page 16).

There are over 110 million Baptists worldwide with large numbers in North America (approximately one in 5 US Christians is Baptist), Africa (including Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo), Asia (including India), Europe (including Romania) and Latin America (including Brazil).

Baptist Churches do not have a central governing authority.

Clergy are called pastors.

# Summary of Essential Practice Points:

Please refer to the full text of the highlighted points related to the following summary points.

## **1** *Profile of Baptist churches in Ireland:*

Baptist members may be Irish, English, North American and from new communities including Brazil, Romania and Nigeria. Currently there are at least twenty ethnic groups identified in Irish Baptist Churches, and there are two Romanian language congregations in Dublin.

## **2** *Religious contacts and religious practices:*

The person may wish to see their own pastor; hence it is important to clarify the name of a religious contact who can be called for religious support and guidance for the healthcare setting. The website address at the end of the section can be used to develop contacts for the Baptist community.

## **3** *Death-related religious rituals:*

There is no formal death ritual in the Baptist tradition. In cases of imminent death the person's pastor should be called so that the person and family can receive the religious and spiritual support that they need.

## **4** *Cleaning and touching the body:*

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

## **5** *Initiation ritual/infant baptism:*

Baptism, the initiation ritual common to Christian traditions, is considered to be a voluntary declaration of faith conducted at a time when the person is ready. Therefore, baptism of infants is not practised even in the case of imminent threat to life.

## Profile of Baptist Churches in Ireland

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Baptists have been in Ireland since around 1650, initially establishing churches in Cork, Dublin, Kilkenny and Waterford. Census 2006 indicated that Baptist Churches increased their membership by over 47% between 2002 and 2006, with 3,338 members in 2006.

### Essential Practice Point

1

Those who are likely to belong to the Baptist movement may be Irish, English, North American and from new communities including Brazil, Romania and Nigeria. Currently there are at least twenty ethnic groups identified in Irish Baptist Churches.

Baptist Churches in the Irish State tend to regard themselves as evangelical and many participate in associations of evangelical churches. At present there are Baptist Churches in a number of major urban centres as well as more rural areas. Many congregations, particularly in urban areas, have a mix of ethnic groups. In Dublin there are two Romanian language congregations in addition to the English speaking ones.

## Care of the ill

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### **Religious contacts and religious practices**

#### Essential Practice Point

2

- The contact details at the end of the section can be used to develop a local Baptist Church contact for ongoing dialogue and relationship building with the community.
- The person is likely to wish to see their own pastor for religious and spiritual support. It is important to clarify the name of a religious contact who can be called as necessary for support for the person and guidance for the healthcare setting. This will be particularly important in times of critical illness and death-related matters.
- Baptists, relatively speaking, place less emphasis on religious ceremony, rituals and symbols. The *Sacrament of Holy Communion*, a religious ceremony common to Christian traditions, may be requested and can be administered by a Baptist pastor or a chaplain/clergy from the Methodist or Presbyterian Churches. Where a chaplain or minister from another church is called, the chaplain should be made aware of what is being requested and be agreeable to fulfilling the request. Additionally, where possible, the person should be notified that a chaplain from another church is being called.

### **Blood Transfusion and Organ Transplantation**

There is no religious objection to these procedures.

## Care of the Dying

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### **Death-related religious rituals**

#### Essential Practice Point

3

- In times of critical illness or imminent death a Baptist pastor should be called so that the person and family can receive the spiritual support that they need.
- There is no formal death rite/ritual in the Baptist tradition. The pastor and/or other members may recite Christian hymns (songs) and prayers at the bedside. Holding the person's hand to give comfort and support is also common; these practices may be carried out even if the person is unconscious.

### **Cleaning and touching the body**

#### Essential Practice Point

4

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

### **Postmortem requirements**

There is no religious objection to postmortem.

### **Interment ritual**

Both burial and cremation are acceptable generally. Usually a funeral service is held and the community provide support to the family.

## **Bereavement**

The pastor will become involved with the family to aid the bereavement process. Baptists tend to emphasise the support provided by community in times of bereavement.

## Religious Icons and Symbols

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### **Personal and religious items**

- The person may have a copy of the *Christian Bible* or may request one. Some may wear a plain cross, a common symbol in Christianity.
- Any other items are likely to be specific to the individual and the family rather than have religious significance.

### **Use of religious symbols**

- A plain cross is appropriate in the mortuary area.
- It is not appropriate to display a crucifix, images of Mary (the Mother of Jesus), saints or icons from other traditions in a mortuary area where a deceased Baptist is laid out.
- Candles are not necessary.

## Additional Notes on Maternity and Paediatric Care

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### ***Initiation ritual/infant baptism***

#### Essential Practice Point

5

- Baptism, the initiation ritual common to Christian traditions, is considered to be a voluntary declaration of faith conducted at a time when the person is ready. Therefore, baptism of infants is not practised even in the case of imminent threat to life.
- Instead of baptism the pastor may hold an infant dedication service in the church in the form of a thanksgiving prayer for a new infant, the family and the support of the community for the new member.

### ***Foetal, infant and child death***

- There are no formal practices/rituals required for stillbirth and miscarriage. A service may be held at the request of the family.
- Normally a service is held for deceased infants and children, while the nature of the service depends on the age of the child and the parents' wishes. The pastor will be a resource in these matters.

### ***Memento of a deceased child***

- Baptists emphasise the need for support and care for a family when a child dies and as such offering a memento of a deceased child is seen as a welcome and appropriate gesture.

## Developing a Local Baptist Church Contact

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The Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland comprises churches from all parts of the island. The Association could be a useful starting point in developing a local Baptist contact. The website address is [www.baptistsinireland.org](http://www.baptistsinireland.org)

However, since each Baptist Church is autonomous not all of those present in the Republic are members.

## Contributors

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Pastor Robert Dunlop, Brannockstown Baptist Church, Kildare, provided information for the first draft of this section. Pastor Robert Millar, Jamestown Road Baptist Church, Finglas, Dublin and Pastor John Samuel, Grosvenor Road Baptist Church, Rathmines, Dublin, jointly reviewed and approved the finalised material.