

# Christian Baptismal Service

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GROTON  
BIBLE  
CHAPEL

## **About Baptism and the Christian Faith**

In one of Jesus' last earthly times with His followers, He commanded them to "***Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.***" — ***Matthew 28:19***

Since that time, baptism has remained a central focus of the Christian Church's work. Baptism makes visible a heart decision and a life work hidden to physical eyes. The act of baptism pictures the identification of the believer with his/her Lord Jesus. Thus, as He lived, died, was buried, and rose from the dead, so in symbolic form the believing Christian participates in that "death" by entering into, and under, the waters of baptism and is then raised up again.

The ceremony which we enact this morning acts as a witness to those who have never asked Jesus to be their personal Savior and Lord. Each of those being baptized bears witness to the work of Jesus in his or her life. Their testimonies are presented below. This time also encourages Christians to remember the wonder of their new lives and to live consistently with their professions of faith.

Those who give their stories below would be eager to tell you what Jesus means to them. And if this morning prompts further questions on your part, please do not hesitate to contact the leaders of the Chapel.

May our Lord Jesus receive all praise for His continuing work in the world and in the hearts of His people.

## **TESTIMONIES — 9:00am**

### **Jaclyn Berry-Eaton**

Before Christ, I was searching many empty avenues for fulfillment. Every path lead to a dead end and more emptiness. I wanted to grow my faith with Christ. I wanted to love and honor my children and my husband and I knew that meant I first needed to begin with loving and honoring Christ. In the spring of 2023, I returned back to GBC and devoted every Sunday to be in God's Word. I dove in. By the end of the summer, I was ready to commit my life to Christ. Tanya Patten had noticed the change in me and talked with me about where I stood in my faith. When I expressed to her there was a longing desire to know the Word and to know God, she asked if I liked to be saved. She explained what that meant and from the depths of my heart's cry it was a "Yes!" On Wednesday, August 31st, 2023 I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Tanya prayed over me and told me I was welcome to pray aloud after. I felt a "sealed with a kiss" moment and that the temple doors to my chamber closed with the Holy Spirit illuminating inside. Since accepting the Lord, I've had the Holy Spirit move through me. How I view and walk through the world has changed. There's a sense of peace in my heart, a silence, a stillness, and a trusting in Him.

## Julio Nieves

Before truly making Jesus my Lord and Savior, I struggled with identity, and depended on the earth to discover my purpose. Attending church every Sunday my whole life, I used to think it was good enough for God. I figured since I was baptized as a kid, I did enough to inherit the kingdom of God. My young adult life was sin-filled, and I chose lukewarm Christianity to get by. Early this year I realized my life was crumbling by playing a man of God on Sunday, and doing whatever the flesh desired Monday through Saturday. I became ashamed of who I was, and was afraid to come to God because I wasn't good enough. This was a lie from the devil himself. Through all the darkness I filled my life with over the years, I always knew I never gave God a true chance. I never fully surrendered my life into God's hands. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that I must turn away from the hollow fulfillment of sin, in order to truly receive God's goodness. The moment I sought God's kingdom first, I discovered my identity and purpose on earth. There is no mistake we have made that will cause God to reject us. Jesus dying on the cross has erased our mistakes from God's record. All we need to do is obey God's word, claim Jesus as our Savior, and we'll receive the consistent peace and joy only God can provide from His love alone. It's never too late.

## Stephanie Vetrano

I was baptized as a baby, but before recently choosing to actively accept and acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, I wasn't holding myself accountable for my sins, big or small — almost like I didn't have to answer to anyone. I started reading the Bible, which I never did before, and I couldn't deny the scripture. **Romans 12:21** says **"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."** This scripture means a lot to me and shows me the correct way, God's way, to approach conflict and other evils surrounding us in life on Earth — love your enemies the way Christ loved His enemies. It brought to my attention that Christ overcomes my evils with His goodness everyday — He constantly forgives my sins and shows me love and mercy each and every day through His blessings, which since coming to know the Lord, I am grateful for everyday. Since getting to know the Lord more each day, and choosing to live by His word, I've only been blessed, and most importantly, blessed to have a true relationship with God. I have begun to see and understand the positive things God has done, and is doing in my life today. I've learned to treat people and approach situations in a Christ-centered way. My life continues to get more joyous with each day I come to know the Lord — God is good and I want to truly know Him, and I want Him to truly know me.

## Anthony (Tony) Russell

Most of my life I declared myself a Christian, but my truth was that this belief was hollow. I loved the idea of being a Christian, but did not believe in my heart. Therefore, I refused to give up control of my life, succumbed to sin, and was a selfish person who acted out my faith shallowly, and insincerely.

All this changed for me this past MLK Jr. weekend. That weekend, Christ, working through the discipleship of a friend and a weekend of preaching and reflection on Romans, moved me to finally open my heart to Him. When I invited Christ into my heart, He demonstrated His faithful grace through the redemption and restoration of my relationship with someone very special in my life.

That weekend I came to believe that, **"since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God...and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."** — **Romans 5:1-2, 5**

Since welcoming Christ into my heart I have experienced a constant sense of joy, peace, and contentment, even in moments of difficulty. My doubts are washed away, my heart is filled, and my mind is at peace knowing that Christ is in me and I am in Him.

## **Alec Russell**

My testimony is fairly simple. I have called myself a Christian for the majority of my life. In 9th grade, my family moved from Fairfax, VA to Old Lyme, CT. I was outwardly fine, but inwardly I was angry — angry at my parents and God. I made it my mission to cause as much pain to them as I could. I gave up on school and stopped trying to improve. After my senior year I moved on to college, where the same habits persisted. I was lost and confused. I had only harmed myself with my apathy. I applied for an internship at White Sulphur Springs in PA. When I got there, I was enveloped in a purely Christian environment. All of the leaders were striving to be like Christ, which inspired me to begin doing the same. During my 2 years there, God uncovered my anger and made me face the harsh reality that anger is useless. I was moved when my father, who I had been most angry with for years, asked ME for forgiveness, and not the other way around. I made a decision after that to reaffirm myself to Christ, and have been striving to do so to this day.

## **Nick Stauffer**

I grew up in a Christian household and was familiar with the Bible. I prayed, and I believed, and so I considered myself a Christian. Looking back, I now realize that at the time, I completely misunderstood what Christianity was actually about, and as such, my faith had no foundation. That is why when faced with challenges to my faith in undergrad, I slipped into agnosticism and eventually atheism. By the time I had graduated pharmacy school and entered the Service, I had become an aggressive atheist, harassing coworkers for their beliefs. With no moral compass, I lived a life reveling in sin, specifically pride and sexual immorality.

Eventually, I decided that I wanted a real relationship, so I signed up for online dating. I soon matched with the woman who would eventually become my wife. At first, it didn't matter to me that my wife was a Christian; she could have her beliefs, and I could have mine. Although she never tried to push Christianity onto me, I could tell how important her faith was to her, and as the relationship got more serious, this became more irritating to me. I eventually decided to gather evidence to disprove God and Christianity once and for all, for me and for her. In the months that followed as I attempted to objectively build my case against Christianity, I discovered that not only was I unable to disprove God, but also that Christianity was the only possible explanation for our existence and reality. For several months, I wrestled with my conclusion—and the implications it had on the sinful life I had been living—before I finally decided to lay down my pride and accept Jesus as my Savior on the 18th of January, 2021.

As I had considered myself a “Christian” when I was younger, I thought that accepting Jesus as my Savior was the end of the story. As I began to read the Bible, the Lord began to reveal Himself to me, and I soon realized how wrong I was: the story of my reconciled relationship with God was only just beginning! I began to realize how much God loved me and wanted to have a personal relationship with me the whole time! This was the crux of Christianity that had been missing before: that personal relationship. Though I had turned away, He pursued me, and through Jesus's sacrifice, I am able to come back into His holy presence despite my sin. I was the sheep who had gone astray, and he left the ninety-nine to bring me back to Him. That love means everything to me, and I know that it is real.

## **Madison Ross**

When I was young, my family would go to church on most Sundays, but when me and my siblings got to the age where sports and other activities started, we stopped going. My whole life I have believed in Jesus and knew He was there but never really had a relationship with Him until now.

About 4 years ago I was diagnosed with OCD and really bad anxiety. This was very hard for me to handle on a day to day basis because of how anxious I was but in the back of my mind I always knew “Jesus is in control”. Because of my struggle with this I would pray on a daily basis to the Lord, asking Him to help ease my anxiety and letting Him know that even though this isn't easy I trust in His plan for my life. Ever since I started praying to Him I have felt much more at peace and can ease my anxieties by telling myself “Jesus has my back, He is always with me and will never fail me” and this has helped me a lot. A scripture I lean

*(Madison Ross Continued)*

on is **Jeremiah 29:11** — **“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”** Even though I still struggle with my OCD and anxiety I know that I can trust in the Lord and cast my worries on Him. He knows the plan for my life and I trust Him with it.

Coming to know Jesus as my Savior has been the greatest thing that has happened to me. I have never felt so passionate about something in my life. Jesus is so amazing and I am so grateful that I finally have come to know Him and have a relationship with Him. Turning away from my worries and giving my life to the Lord has changed my life and I have never felt more safe and loved than I do now. I have wanted to be baptized for a few years now and now I am finally ready. This is because I have grown in my relationship with Jesus over the past year and know that I’m ready to show my commitment to Him and give my life to Him.

### **Ryan Travis**

I grew up in a Catholic home but I would attend my aunt and uncle's Pentecostal church. I went with them for a few years but then I back slid. I suppose it was when I was old enough to drink. I was ashamed of this because I became addicted and did not want to stop. When my father died I recognized that Jesus was the one I had to turn to. I prayed for help, understanding, comfort, and strength. This year I celebrated 3 years of being sober of alcohol and drugs. I am very proud of what my Lord and Savior has done in my life since getting sober. I have coworkers that I pray with on a daily basis but this week I prayed in the sanctuary, on my knees, and I recognized my sin and said that I want to turn away from it. I asked God for forgiveness of my sin and I confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe He died on the cross for my sin. Then He was raised to life. I asked Him into my heart and to take control of my life. I want Him as my Savior and as my Lord. I want to share my story with the people that I come in contact with. I’m sharing my faith with my 2 year old son. I pray that he will come to know the Lord as I have. I feel God is working in my life daily.

### **Jessica McBrearty**

Before I made Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior, I was caught in a season of depression and grief. My father passed due to a sudden heart attack in February 2019. I wasn’t one to follow a certain type of religion before this tragic event. In October 2021, my cousin invited me to GBC. I started attending every Sunday with her and my aunt.

November 11, 2021, I was at the cemetery. I was looking around taking in the cool breeze, blue skies and the birds chirping. I took a deep breath in and exhaled out and finally felt this overcoming feeling of peace. “Be Still” came to my mind as I continued to look around. Since I was newer to the Christian religion I was curious if there were any bible verses with the saying, “Be Still”. **Psalms 46:10** came up: **“He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”**

After reading this verse I knew God was with me at that moment. I gave my life to Him that day. In that very moment I knew I needed to be saved from my sins and to follow Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He is in control and we should not worry for He has a plan for each one of us.

## **TESTIMONIES — 10:45am**

### **Samantha Abate**

I was born into a majority Christian household. I’ve been going to GBC all my life. I attended church every Sunday, and went to Awana whenever I could. Even though I was going to church, I had a hard time believing that someone or something was capable of doing all of the things that Christ did. I felt like I was only going to church to satisfy my family, I didn’t actually believe it for myself. Then I started attending the teen service and they brought us to Berea Deep Freeze. During that time, I could feel something moving inside of me. That night, I had talked to one of my leaders, and asked them all of the questions that I had

*(Samantha Abate Continued)*

in attempts to eradicate any doubts that I had about my faith. I dedicated my life to Christ after that conversation, finally deciding for myself to live for Him. Before I knew Him, my life was so dark and lonely, but since I chose to follow Him, I know that I am not alone and that He will never leave me nor forsake me.

### **Emily Campbell**

I was born into your typical Christian household. I grew up going to church and youth group. My mother and I talked about Jesus often, and I accepted Him into my heart at a young age.

Around 7th grade my life took a turn. I no longer wanted to go to church or just read my bible in general. I felt surrounded by worldly things and began to drift from God. I was having a ton of issues with friends and felt completely alone. I began to struggle with anxiety. It wasn't until I heard the verse **John 16:33**, that I realized I needed a closer relationship with Christ. I was having a whole lot of trouble and not a lot of peace. Soon I began reading my bible again and enjoying going to church.

In the teen service we started to talk about baptism and the classes. As we talked about this, I felt ashamed because I had not been baptized yet and I felt that people were judging me because of it. Unfortunately, I was just too afraid to go in front of people and do it. Then at winter camp last year the lesson was on fear and how it was keeping me from getting closer to God. That hit me deep in the chest because fear was holding me back from getting baptized. So here I am getting baptized. I am excited to show the world that I am a follower of Jesus.

My favorite verse is **Revelation 21:4**. I love the reminder that one day there will be no more tears and no more trouble, there will only be peace.

### **Ava Grundy**

I accepted Jesus as my Savior when I was 5 years old. I was born into a Christian family. I've always known about Jesus, and I've always gone to church and VBS. When I was 5, I understood that I was a sinner and that the only way to have eternal life with Jesus was if I accepted Him as my Savior, and I really wanted that eternal life once I died so I could spend the time with God. Now that He is my Savior, I pray to him when I am sad. I also really like learning more about Him at T & T, Sunday school, and VBS. Now that it has been 5 years since I accepted Jesus I feel like it's time to get baptized.

### **Matthias Parsons**

Before I knew Jesus, I experienced anxiety and was worried about many things at school and home. But during youth service, we were just singing about GOD I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I felt contentment and peace. I can rely on Jesus to help me through times I have anxiety. The scripture that I have claimed by faith is **John 3:16** — **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."**

### **Logan Andrus**

Before I was even 2 years old, I had parents who did not know God and were broken. The result was that I went to go live with my grandparents. They taught me early about the way of God and what it meant to be a Christian. I grew up knowing who He was but I didn't know Him personally. Two years ago I went to Reverb and heard the messages and the truths that were being shared. I wanted my relationship with Jesus to become personal, so that night I prayed that He would be my Savior. I went home and asked my grandparents to tell me more about Him and started reading the Bible. When I look back at my life before Jesus, I feel I was in a pit but when I called out to Him, He showed me the way out. I want to share the verse **Psalms 40:2** — **"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand."** I feel like this verse is a recap of my testimony. I was in a pit but God pulled me out. That is why I want to make my faith public through baptism.

## **Aaron Fulling**

Before I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, making crucial decisions that could affect me was tough. I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior at around eight or nine. Me and my small group leader prayed about it and I was welcomed into the family of God. I have been able to make better decisions that are better for me and honoring to God. **Jeremiah 29:11** says **“For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope”**. I have recognized that I am a sinner and that that sin has separated me from God and that I have accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I know that He has taken away my sin and has made me blameless before God.

## **Tarius Rivers**

I grew up deep in the south in New Orleans, LA, during many troubled times. We went to Catholic Church, Southern Baptist Church and non denominational churches until we finally landed in Algiers at Love Outreach Community Center. My home was in that church. I accepted Christ at age 12. Despite my faith during childhood, I wandered during high school, college and the US Army, and seemed to be lost in faith. After 20 years, I ended up in Uncasville, CT and was introduced to Groton Bible Chapel, where I found a comfortable spiritual home. The same year, in 2012, God blessed me with my son Lyrik. GBC was my home for my son and I, and has been a place of refuge where my son could be raised in the love and truth of God. My life would not be the same without this church. I am excited to get baptized at the same time as my son, for both of us to publicly declare that Jesus is our Savior.

**Psalm 23:4 — “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.”**

## **Lyrik Rivers**

I grew up in GBC, from 4 months old. The teachers and leaders in this church taught me about the love of God. I accepted Jesus at 8 years old and wanted to get baptized then. I am excited that I am not only getting baptized now, but that I am getting baptized at the same time as my dad.

**John 20:31 — “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”**

## **Abigail Matter**

My soul has always delighted in Christ, but my human nature had me forget that joy. I had the blessing of growing up in a Christian household. When I was a baby and inconsolable on car rides, my mom would play Blessed be The Name, and I would promptly stop crying. I was an infant, and I delighted in Christ. Seven years later, I accepted Jesus as my Savior. As a child, Jesus was my best friend. I loved him dearly, and I knew he loved me as well. Then I became a teenager, and I was riddled with anxieties about my relationship with Him. I recommitted my life to Him several times, thinking each time that it would fill what was missing. Jesus was supposed to fulfill me, and yet I still felt like something was missing. So I put Him on the back burner. I stopped delighting in Him.

In April of 2022, I felt a tug to my Bible, so I picked it up and began to immerse myself in the scriptures. I was ravenous, and I wanted more. I wanted to know Jesus for myself. And He revealed Himself to me as both my Savior and Lord. I read **Isaiah 6:3**, and that simple yet profound verse was what led me to fully accept Christ as my Lord and Savior. Since that day, I’ve been filled with indescribable peace and joy. I was never going to be fully satisfied with a Jesus that I had tried to declaw. It was by submitting to Him, and having my eyes opened to His Lordship, that my soul began to overflow. Nothing is missing now. I delight in Him, my soul blesses His name.

## **Alisha Anselmo**

I grew up in church and knew Jesus from a young age. When my parents divorced, church wasn’t a priority for my family anymore. In my 20’s I walked away from God. I was living in disobedience, justifying my

*(Alisha Anselmo Continued)*

behavior saying "all these terrible things have happened to me, so I deserve to do whatever makes me happy." For over 10 years I struggled with Alcoholism. I was in my own prison and eventually, everything in my life crumbled. I was spiritually dead and even welcomed death. How did I let this go so far? One particularly rough night led me to break down. I cried out "I don't want to live this way anymore" and I could hear God saying to me, "Have you had enough?" I let go of everything and surrendered in defeat. Everything I had touched, I ruined. I begged Jesus to save me and the life I created. Only Jesus could clean up such a mess.

Now, I'm almost 2 years sober. I'm alive today because Jesus loved me at my worst. He never gave up on me! Putting my life back in God's hands, where it belonged all along, was the only way! So now, Jesus fills my cup everyday. I'm alive because He lives. I owe Him everything. I failed the first time because I tried to control what was never mine in the first place. So I've built this new life on Jesus and I get to walk with Him every day.

### **Scott Knowlton**

I was raised in a mostly secular household. I grew up atheist believing that I didn't need God or faith in my life. I felt strongly about this until around 2 years ago. My life hadn't been difficult up to that point, but I realized that it was empty. I had no passions or fulfillment in life. It felt like there was something missing, and I didn't know what it was or how to find it.

Jesus made himself known to me slowly, and in ways that I didn't completely understand at the time. At first it was me sitting in on some coworkers' bible study. Later it was my atheist beliefs being challenged by exposing myself to Christian morals and ideals. Eventually I began to seek out the word, attending church, and placing my trust and faith in God.

I have only been a Christian for a short time, but I can already see and feel Jesus working through me. He has blessed me with some of my best friends, a fulfilling life, and hope for the future. Jesus gave His life for my salvation, so I now want to dedicate mine to serving Him.

### **Derrick Altenburger**

I grew up in the church, but not knowing what it meant to walk with Christ. Church was just a thing we did on Sunday from my point of view. I knew who Jesus was, but I just didn't know how much I needed him. I did the best I could to follow all of the rules and get the best grades, but it all amounted to nothing. I kept building up stress in my life by doing this on my own and did not have any direction of where I was going. It wasn't until I was hiking in the woods at church camp, separated from everything, that I concluded I can't do this without Him. I laid my burdens on Jesus and surrendered my life to Him. I immediately felt him start driving me in a direction I never thought I would go. I joined the Navy, and it took me to a plethora of places that have pieced together my life with what some call coincidences. It wasn't until I was married to my wonderful wife that I took my new life I had with the seriousness it deserved and together we strengthened our relationships with our Heavenly Father. However, it wasn't until here at Groton Bible Chapel when my daughter was asking me about baptism that I realized that I had not been baptized since I was saved. It is a celebration and a declaration of my salvation. So here I am following what Christ directed and doing as He had done Himself, declaring to the world that I am saved. The verse that stays with me is **John 16:33 — "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have sufferings in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."**