Baptism and Intellectual Disability in the Christian Tradition: 
A Research Study

Introduction

My name is Sarah Barton. I am a researcher at Duke University. I am a Christian theologian. My research is about what people in churches think about baptism. I also work as an occupational therapist (OT) at Duke Hospital. My research on baptism is not connected to my work as an OT. Here is a picture of me.

Right now I am researching what people with intellectual disabilities, their families, friends, and pastors think about baptism. I am interested in hearing more from people with disabilities about their baptism, whether or not they can remember it. I am interested in hearing from people who can talk. I also want to hear stories from people who can’t talk (people who are non-verbal), through an interpreter, an assistive communication device, or meeting them with people who know them well. I am also interested in attending church services to observe and participate as part of my research.

Why Am I Doing This Project?

I am doing this project to learn more about what Christians think about baptism and disability. I am doing this research as a part of writing my dissertation for my doctoral degree in theology at Duke Divinity School.

What Does Participation Look Like?

Part of my research will be observing at different faith communities. I will be asking permission to participate as an observer in these communities for at least two services.

Another part of my research is interviewing different people. I will interview people with and without intellectual disabilities, including lay people, clergy/pastors, and families and
friends of adults with intellectual disabilities who have been baptized in North Carolina. Each interview will be 30-90 minutes long.

**How Much Time Will It Take?**

The interviews for this study will take between 30 and 90 minutes each. My observation in faith communities will be for the length of at least two services.

**Will You Remain Confidential?**

All people who are interviewed will pick a pretend name (pseudonym) that will be used in anything I write about the research. This will help to protect participant privacy (confidentiality). There will also be a pretend name (pseudonym) picked for the church or faith communities where I am observing. Any other identifying information in the interviews will be changed to protect privacy (confidentiality) in anything I write about the research.

**Do You Have to Participate in This Research?**

Individuals and churches **do not** have to participate in this research study. If individuals or churches want to stop participation in this research, they can do so at any time.

**What Happens Now?**

If you are interested in participating in this research study, and/or know someone or a faith community who may be interested, please contact Sarah via email, call, or text message.

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