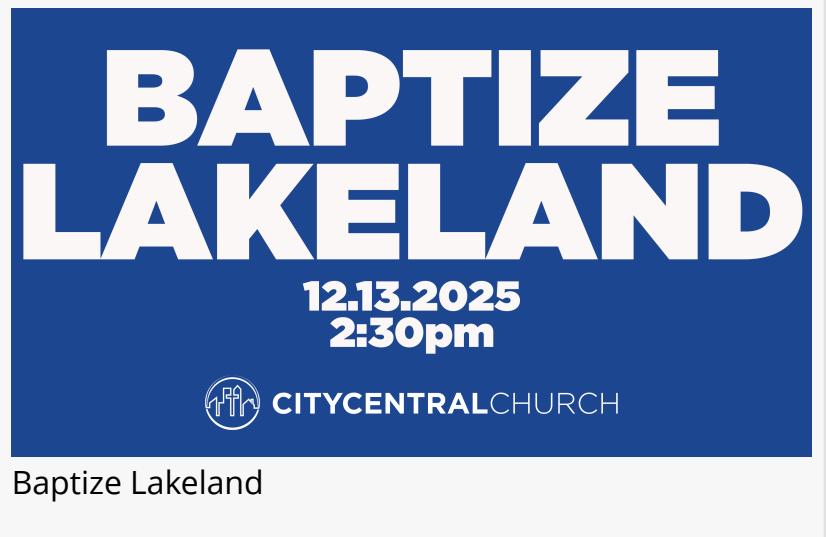


Baptize Lakeland: A Citywide Call to Faith and Renewal — December 13, 2025

This free, city-wide event invites individuals of all ages and backgrounds to publicly declare their faith in Jesus Christ through baptism.

LAKELAND, FL, UNITED STATES, October 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Saturday, December 13, 2025, at 2:30 PM, people from across Polk County will gather at [City Central Church](#) in the heart of Lakeland for a powerful and unifying moment of faith—Baptize Lakeland. This free, city-wide event invites individuals of all ages and backgrounds to publicly declare their faith in Jesus Christ through baptism.



“

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Pastor Jay Dennis

Hosted at City Central Church, located at 310 Frank Lloyd Wright Way, Lakeland, Florida, the event will be officiated by the church's senior pastoral team, led by Pastor Jay Dennis, a respected spiritual leader in Central Florida known for his dynamic teaching and compassionate heart for people. Pastor Jay, who served for 21 years as Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church at the Mall, will be joined by Associate Pastor Lonnie Lawson and the City Central ministry team.

A Movement of Obedience and Revival

“Baptize Lakeland is more than an event—it's a movement,” said Pastor Jay Dennis. “It's an opportunity for

men, women, and children to take the next step in their spiritual journey by obeying Jesus' command to be baptized. This is a visible act of faith that publicly identifies us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Baptism is one of the most powerful and symbolic actions a believer can take. It signifies both an

inward transformation and an outward declaration—what the Bible describes as being ‘buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life.’ “Baptism doesn’t save you,” Pastor Jay explained. “It simply tells the world that you have been saved—that you are a serious follower of Jesus Christ. It’s the greatest confession of our faith and our passionate desire to follow Him.”

Why Baptism Matters

Baptize Lakeland is rooted in the belief that baptism is a command from Jesus Christ, not merely a tradition.

Referencing Matthew 28:19-20, Pastor Jay emphasizes that Jesus called His followers to ‘go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.’

“Think of baptism like a wedding ring,”

Pastor Jay shared. “Wearing a ring doesn’t make you married, but it shows the world that you are committed to someone. Baptism does the same thing—it’s our way of saying, ‘I belong to Jesus.’”

The event is designed to make baptism accessible for anyone ready to take this important step of faith. Whether someone recently decided to follow Christ or has been a believer for years but never been baptized by immersion, Baptize Lakeland provides the opportunity to obey Christ’s command in a supportive and celebratory setting.

Who Should Get Baptized?

Anyone who has personally received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is invited to participate.

“Once a person has placed their faith in Jesus, baptism should follow as soon as possible,” Pastor Jay said. “Delayed obedience is disobedience.”

He explained that baptism isn’t restricted by age—it’s about understanding. “If a child truly understands the gospel and desires to follow Jesus, parents shouldn’t hold them back because of age. What matters most is a sincere heart and clear understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ.”

A Biblical Example of Immediate Obedience

Pastor Jay shared one of his favorite examples from the Book of Acts. “In Acts 8, an Ethiopian official was reading Isaiah 53 and didn’t understand it. God sent Philip to explain the Gospel to him. Once the man believed, he saw a body of water and asked, ‘What prevents me from being



baptized?' Philip told him, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' Immediately, they stopped the chariot, went down into the water, and he was baptized."

He continued, "That same spirit of immediacy is what we're inviting people to embrace. Once you've decided to follow Jesus, baptism should follow quickly—it's your first act of obedience as a new believer."

An Invitation to the City of Lakeland

City Central Church envisions Baptize Lakeland as an annual tradition that unites churches and believers throughout the city under one mission: to lift up the name of Jesus.

"This is not about joining a church," said Associate Pastor Lonnie Lawson. "It's about joining a movement of faith across Lakeland. We want every person who has received Christ—no matter where they worship—to have the opportunity to make that public declaration of faith."

[Participants can register in advance](#) at BaptizeLakeland.org for planning purposes, though same-day registration will also be available. The church will provide everything needed for baptism, including towels, changing rooms, and volunteers to assist participants and families.

About Pastor Jay Dennis

Pastor Jay Dennis is the Senior Pastor and co-founder of City Central Church in Lakeland, Florida. He began leading the church along with his wife, Angie, and co-founder Randy Ferreira and his wife, Julee, in January 2022. Before founding City Central, he served for 21 years as Senior Pastor of the 9,000-member First Baptist Church at the Mall, one of Florida's most influential churches.

After retiring in 2017 due to health issues, Pastor Jay returned to ministry with renewed passion and a vision to reach Lakeland with the love and truth of Jesus Christ. In addition to his pastoral role, he serves as the President of [Wingman Nation](#) Ministries, a national men's ministry focused on equipping men to be godly leaders in their homes, workplaces, and communities. He is also a published author of multiple books on faith and Christian living.

About City Central Church

Located in the heart of Lakeland's historic district, City Central Church was founded with a mission to connect people to Jesus, community, and purpose. The church emphasizes biblical teaching, worship, and outreach initiatives designed to impact the city for Christ.

Under Pastor Jay's leadership, City Central has become a hub for local ministry partnerships, discipleship, and family-centered outreach. "We exist to help people discover who Jesus is, grow in their faith, and make Him known," Pastor Jay said.

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