Making a Baptism Pool

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Trinity Church needed an easy to setup baptism pool which could be used for baptisms in services — here's how we made one without breaking the bank or flooding the church!

The Requirements:

A baptism pool that:

- could be dismantled for storage
- could be constructed within a modest budget
- could be built from available materials
- was capable of allowing a full-length adult immersion with baptisers inside the pool.

The Design Concept:

- To make an octagonal frame body in plywood.
- To build the body so it could be folded for storage.
- To make it water-tight using a heavy plastic pool liner.

Additional Features:

The hinged frame design allows for flexible trade-off between the space requirements of those being baptised and those baptising. It can be elongated or widened before the liner is placed in position.

Materials & Specifications

Frame

The eight panels are made of 9 mm hardwood plywood [triplex]

Dimensions for six panels are 800 mm wide, 600 mm high, with the two end panels being 400 mm wide. Larger dimensions are possible. Anything smaller may prove too cramped.

Hinges

These are standard 3-bolt fixing but could also be longer-tongued style if available. 16x required.

Hinge Fasteners

Galvanised fittings: M8 x 16mm long round-head bolts, plain washer & hex nut (check your hinge holes will take this size). 48x required.

Liner

Made from 0.5 mm pond-lining material. This is soft and flexible enough to fold into the frame and ensure water containment in a church sanctuary. 10 mm plastic chanel trim was used to cap the plywood sheets and provide a smooth safety edge.

Skirting

Added for appearance only with hooks made of plastic-coated wire.

Heating

Water heating was by 600 watt floating pond warmer available from Aquarium suppliers.

Draining

Water drainage was by electric bilge pump, this took 15 minutes with a 25 mm bore drainage hose.

Assembly

Frame & Hinges

The eight panels of 9 mm hardwood plywood were set end-to-end at 600 mm high, then fixed in place using two metal hinges at each join. 10 mm wide plastic chanel capping was glued along topside of frame to give safety edge for plastic liner.

Bolts with rounded heads were mounted from the inside face and secured with washer & nut at the outside position. Nuts were only tightened moderately to avoid digging into the top layer of ply The rounded bolt heads on the inside prevented damage to the lining material.

Toweling

Towels were placed along the joins to protect the lining material when in contact with the plywood edges (a precaution not really necessary).

Liner

The liner material was soft and flexible enough to fold into and around the frame, with any overlap extending over the top edge.

Tension Band

A ratchet strap was used in anticipation of horizontal water pressure straining the panels and hinges - this was actually not necessary. Some form of strap or elastic however is useful for holding the liner material in place.

Skirt

The skirt was added as a final decoration. It was suspended by wire clips coated with heat shrink plastic so as not to damage the liner. The plastic wire coating also helped avoid scratching people as they stepped in/out of the pool.

Filling

The pool was filled with cold water from a domestic water supply.

Water Heating

The filled pool was heated overnight using the floating pond warmer. 10 hours overnight brought it up from 15 deg to 23 deg. Longer is recommend.