



Understanding Baptism St. Mark's United, Cannifton

Baptism is one of two sacraments celebrated in the United Church of Canada. We understand baptism as a sacred act, where we acknowledge God and God acknowledges us. Through the prayers of the gathered community and the symbolic use of water, we recognize the candidate's acceptance of New Life in Jesus Christ and her/his acceptance as part of God's universal family. Baptism is conducted using words that acknowledge the Triune God (Father, Son, Spirit) and with the liberal use of water.¹

The United Church of Canada has been explicit in its understanding that baptism is not a prerequisite for the person to receive God's love. We believe God has loved each person since before they were born.

Adult Baptism

When the candidate for baptism is an adult, she/he becomes a member of the universal church of Jesus Christ and specifically a member of the St. Mark's, Cannifton, congregation of the United Church of Canada. During baptism the candidate professes faith in the triune God and makes commitments to

- seek justice and resist evil;
- follow the way of Jesus Christ; and
- further the mission and ministry of the Church.

From that point forward, she/he may exercise all the privileges and responsibilities of full membership.

Once baptised the person's name is added to the Historic Roll of the congregation; if he/she moves to another congregation membership is generally transferred to the receiving congregation. Through inter-church agreement, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Lutheran Church, United Church of Canada, Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church of Canada all recognized each other's practice of baptism.

Infant/Child Baptism

When the person being baptised is an infant or younger child, who cannot make the promises for her/himself, then the parents will make the baptismal promises on behalf of the candidate. The promises include

- A profession of faith in the triune God;
- A commitment to seek justice and resist evil;
- A commitment to follow the way of Jesus Christ;
- A commitment to the mission and ministry of the Church.

¹ "Overview of Beliefs", <http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/overview> United Church of Canada, accessed February 14, 2014.

At a later date, when the child has matured, she/he is invited to confirm the baptismal vows made on her/his behalf. Through a Profession of Faith, during a service of worship, the person becomes a full member of the United Church of Canada and St. Mark's, Cannifton, congregation.

If at least one of the parents is not a baptised Christian and a full member of the congregation, the Christian Development Committee may assign a sponsor to act as trusted friend offering support to both the candidate and her/his family.

The tradition in the United Church of Canada does not include a specific role for Godparents, as the whole congregation is to act in this role for the baptised child. There may be circumstances where the parents of the candidate wish to acknowledge the role these persons will play in raising the child within the Christian faith. It is essential that this be communicated early in the process, so that the clergyperson will have time to meet with such persons in advance.

Welcome

St. Mark's welcomes a diversity of families to participate in its worshipping life, including the sacrament of baptism. Specifically, we wish to welcome blended families, families who are not married, same-sex families, inter-religious families and inter-generational families.

Timing & Approval

As a sacrament, we celebrate baptism during the regular service of praise and worship on Sunday mornings. During the service of baptism, the congregation makes promises to assist the baptised person in fulfilling the baptismal vows.

The first step in enquiring about baptism is to contact the clergyperson and receive a copy of this policy and the information form. The completed form is then given to the clergyperson and the candidate meets with her/him to discuss baptism. The clergyperson will then present the name of the baptismal candidate to the Christian Development Committee, along with a recommendation. If the Christian Development Committee approves the baptism, the clergyperson will schedule it for a date that is both convenient to the person and for the worshipping life of the congregation.

Emergency Baptism

In cases where there is a risk of imminent death, the clergy, or another baptised Christian, may perform baptism immediately. The baptism must be reported to the Christian Development Committee as soon as possible, so that it may be confirmed and acknowledged during public worship.