

*The United Church of Canada  
Trinity United Church, Summerside, PEI*

**BAPTISM**

The Sacrament of Initiation

Updated January 2024



**Introduction:** Baptism is one of the two sacraments we celebrate in The United Church of Canada, the other being Holy Communion. As such, it is a significant act of worship that needs to be properly prepared for and entered into joyously and seriously. This brochure has been prepared to provide you with information about our understanding of baptism and the policies and expectations of our church.

**The Meaning of Baptism:** Baptism is a time of celebration and promise in which we rejoice in the promises God has made to us and in which we make our own promises to God.

The great promise God has made to us is to love us always. In baptism, we celebrate God's love, a love revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a love that surrounds all of us from our beginning, whether we are baptized or not. Because this is so, baptism should never be seen as a rite that must be performed so that God will love us, care for us or protect us. God has already promised to do all of these things for every person.

In baptism, we also celebrate the loving initiative of God who calls us and invites us to live in relationship with our creator as members of God's family and in the fellowship of the Church, the Body of Christ. This means that baptism is about Church membership. For us in The United Church of Canada, baptism is the rite of initiation into membership in the church. It is the act whereby we are welcomed into the Christian community and reminded of our identity as followers of Jesus Christ. Through baptism, we are incorporated into the Christian faith and the local church family. It is a declaration of a **beginning** and a **belonging** in the family of God and brings with it both privileges and responsibilities. For this reason, baptism is celebrated in the context of congregational worship.

**Procedure**

1. When parents wish to have a child baptized at Trinity United Church Summerside, they are requested to make their wishes known to the church office or one of the ministers at least a month in advance of the next baptism date.
2. In preparation for baptism, parents are to attend a Baptismal preparation program which will usually be held on the Thursday evening a week prior to the baptismal Sunday. For those who have already been through the baptismal program and are requesting baptism for additional children, a meeting will be arranged with one of the ministers. If the parents have not been active in the church since the last baptism, they may be required to attend the baptism instruction again.
3. In cases where a request is made for baptism by a family not connected to Trinity United Church, or if it is a family that is new or inactive, then the following procedures shall be followed. For a family that is new or inactive, then it would be expected that they would become involved in the church prior to the baptism and express their intention to continue their involvement, involvement meaning participation in the church family at worship and in the support of the church's life and work. If neither parent is a member of the United Church of Canada, then it would be expected that they would begin the process to do so. In the meantime, sponsors (members of the church in good standing) could be called upon to stand with the parents and make the promises with them. In instances where parents live outside of our church area, then it would be expected that the family have or are in the process of having a church connection in the area in which they live. A letter from the minister of Membership Committee of that church would be requested to have on file and as a follow-up.

Parents of Sponsor's Promises: Baptism is not only about what God promises us, it is about promises that parents or sponsors make as well.

In baptism, you make your own profession or declaration of faith as you publicly proclaim your belief in God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

You then promise to bring your child up in the Christian faith thus helping your child come to a knowledge and love of God, to provide a Christian home and to encourage your child to make their own profession of faith through confirmation.

Honoring Your Promises: There are many ways in which you can honor your promises:

- by being actively involved in the church itself so you might set an example for your child, celebrate your faith within the church community and grow in your relationship with God;
- by being the kind of parents, whose care and discipline will help your child to understand God's love;
- by cultivating consistent Christian attitudes to life, and so helping your child to live with faith and courage;
- by introducing your child, at an early age, to private prayer and public worship; and
- by helping our congregation to provide Christian development for your own child and children of others.

The Congregation's Promise: Along with God's promises and your promises, Baptism is a significant event in the life of a congregation as it welcomes a new member and make the promise to support that member on his/her faith journey. The congregations seeks to do this through prayer for all who are baptized , through providing Christian development programs where children can grow in their understanding of God and share with other children and adults who are journeying in faith with them, and by including children in the life and worship of the congregation.

As much as a congregation may try to do this, the fact is that the promises it makes can only be fulfilled if the family is actively participating in the church.

**Age for Baptism:** In the United Church of Canada, we celebrate both infant and adult baptism in recognition that God welcomes us into the family of faith at any age. Those baptized as infants (children up to and including age 12) are invited to confirm the faith of their baptism and enter into confirmed membership in the congregation at an appropriate time in the future through the act of confirmation. Through this action, they accept for themselves the promises made by their parents or sponsors at the time of their baptism. For those not baptized before the age of 13, the Sacrament of Adult Baptism is available. Those seeking Adult Baptism are expected to attend the Confirmation Classes along with those seeking confirmation and then make their own promises and commitment to God and the church. For them, baptism and confirmation take place in the one service.

**Sponsors:** In The United Church of Canada, all baptisms are approved by the local congregation's Session, which for us at Trinity takes place through the Church Council. The Church Council has the right to appoint sponsors for children being baptized who stand with the parent or parents and make the promises along with them. These sponsors assume the same responsibility as the parents in seeing that the child is brought up in the faith. We do not have godparents in our tradition, but parents may request to have sponsors of their own choosing to stand with them and share in their promises. Such sponsors need to recognize the seriousness of what they are doing and should be active in their church.

**The Service of Baptism:** Since baptism is a sacrament of the church, it is always celebrated as part of a regular worship service. Normally, we schedule several baptismal services per year. Parents should contact the church at least one month before the desired date so the Church Council may consider the request and pass the appropriate motions. Following is part of the service presently being used:

*Following the Approach of God, the Worship Service will continue as follows:*

- a) A third symbol is the **dove**. The dove is a sign of the Holy Spirit. Through baptism, we pray that God will send the Holy Spirit to be with the child forever. Prior to the baptism, we pray that the Holy Spirit will be with us in this act so God might use baptism, we pray that the Holy Spirit will be with us in this act so God might use baptism to speak to each one of us and stir renewed faith within us. As we share in the baptism of another, we are reminded of our own baptism and challenged to rededicate ourselves to the promises of our baptism.

**Baptism is into the Whole Church:**

Christian baptism is not into a denomination such as The United Church of Canada. Rather, we are baptized into the whole Christian church. All baptisms celebrated in the name of "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" are recognized as valid Christian baptisms by our church (and most mainline churches) and people thus baptized are not re-baptized when transferring to or (usually) from the United Church.

Baptism is a reminder that each of us belongs to God and is called to serve God.

Baptism marks the beginning of your child's new life in Christ. Its force is in your promise that you will bring your child up in the knowledge and love of God and in God's promise to be your God and the God of your children.

Remember, most Christians are home-grown (that is, they come to faith because of the home examples set for them) and God can and is seeking to use your home to bring your child to a faith that will keep he/she forever. In helping to foster such a faith in your child, you are giving one of the greatest gifts you can give.

(All Christian names), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

With the sign of the cross, you become one with Christ, the Anointed one.

**After those presented for baptism have been baptized, the minister shall say:**

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and head of the church, I declare that (Christian names and surname) has now been received into the Holy and Universal Church (or Christian Church or Holy catholic Church).

**And the following shall be said:**

The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. AMEN

(Christian name) child of God, disciple of Christ, member of the church.

Amen.

**The Clerk (Secretary) of the Council will present the baptismal certificates, etc. and a blessing will follow.**

May God bless you all on your continuing faith journeys. Amen.

**The Symbols:** Several symbols are used in the Sacrament of Baptism to provide visual signs of what we are celebrating. The symbols vary from congregation to congregation.

- b) The major symbol of baptism that is always present is **water**. Water is used to symbolize what is taking place in baptism. It is a symbol of forgiveness and speaks of how God washes away our sins so we might live free from the weight of sin and guilt. It is a symbol of our dying to sin and rising to new life in Christ as we emerge from the waters of baptism to share in the resurrection of Jesus. It is a symbol of the life that God gives us as water is essential to all life and as such, reminds us of our need for God if we would find true life.
- c) A second symbol used in baptism is the **sign of the cross**, which is used after the water is sprinkled on the head of the one being baptized. The cross is a symbol of Christ and those baptized are marked with the cross as a sign that they now belong to Christ.

Hear the command of the Risen Christ. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. *Matthew 28: 18-20*

Hear also, the record of our Lord's concern for children. "They were bringing children to Jesus, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter in." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them. *Mark 10: 13-16*

**The minister shall say to the parents (or sponsors)...**

In baptism, we celebrate God's love, a love revealed in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, love which has surrounded this child from his/her beginning. In baptism, we dedicate him/her to God's purposes, knowing that even though we may falter, God will not. God will continue, through the Spirit, the work begun this day, work in which life triumphs over death.

**Question of the parents or sponsor:**

I ask, therefore, do you present your child earnestly desiring that by holy baptism they be made a member of the church of Christ?

Answer: I do.

**The congregation shall rise and the minister shall say:**

Beloved in the Lord, do you receive this child in Christ's name as we have been received, promising to support them with constant love, wholesome example, Christian teaching and faithful prayer? Are you willing to accept so great a responsibility:

Answer: I do.

***The minister shall say to the parents or sponsors:***

I ask you before God and this congregation, do you profess your faith in God, in Jesus Christ your Saviour and Lord, and in the Holy Spirit, your teacher and guide?

Answer: I do.

Will you bring up your child in the knowledge and love of God, teaching them the truths and duties of the Christian faith?

Answer: I will, God being my helper.

Will you make a Christian home for him/her, so fashioning your lives that they may come to know Christ as his/her Lord and Saviour?

Answer: I will, God being my helper.

Will you encourage them to seek confirmation, so that being strengthened in faith by the Holy Spirit and nurtured at the table of the Lord, they may go forth to serve God faithfully in this world?

Answer: I will, God being my helper.

**Affirmation of Faith:**

We are not alone,  
We live in God's world

We believe in God:  
Who has created and is creating,  
Who has come in Jesus,  
The Word made flesh,  
To reconcile and make new,  
Who works in us and others  
By the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

To celebrate God's presence,

To live with respect in Creation,  
To love and serve others,  
To seek justice and resist evil,  
To proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
Our judge and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,

God is with us.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God.

**The minister shall pour the water in the font.**

**The congregation may be seated and the minister shall pray:**

Creator God, we praise and thank you for your gift of life giving water that has flowed through all of creation from the beginning of time. Water is a symbol of your covenant with your people, of renewal and of sustaining life.

Through the flood waters in the time of Noah, you renewed your covenant with creation. In the time of Abraham your promise of great nation and blessings were revealed. Moses led your people out of bondage into the land of promise and renewal. In the waters of the Jordan River, John baptized Jesus Christ and your Spirit descended light a dove upon Jesus.

Your people are renewed by your grace and blessings upon us in this service of baptism. We are Christ's Church, your people and we ask now that your Spirit, O God, descend upon us, surround us and sustain us. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN.

***The minister, taking the child in his/her arms or leaving them in the arms of one of the parents or sponsors, shall say:***

What is the name of this child?

***Having named the child, the minister shall sprinkle water on the head of the child, saying:***