

CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Welcome!

We are very happy that you have inquired about Baptism, and we look forward to helping you and your family with this important step in your faith journey.

We hope you find this resource helpful, answering some of the more commonly asked questions about Baptism, as well as explaining our church's understanding and practice.

When does Baptism take place?

Baptism is offered at various times throughout the year, at dates set in consultation with our Minister and our Worship Committee. Within The United Church of Canada, Baptism is understood to be a public profession of faith, and therefore is included in a Sunday morning service of worship. Private baptism may be conducted for medical or emergency reasons.

What is Baptism?

Understandings of Baptism have changed often over time, and so there are many variations in the global Christian church. We believe that Baptism is a sacred celebration of God's unconditional grace and welcome. It is so much more than a cute ceremony following a baby's birth, but a sacrament, with a rich spiritual heritage and beautiful responsibilities.

When people became Christians in the early church, they were baptized as Jesus had been. They went down under the water, were baptized by full immersion, and came up again. This "burial under water" meant they were dying to their old way of life and being born into a new life in Christ. Although full immersion is certainly an option, in our tradition, people usually come before a baptismal font.

In all practices of Baptism, the powerful, life-giving meaning is still the same. Baptism stands for the new life God gives us through Jesus, and proclaims that we are precious members of God's family.

What age is best for Baptism?

Any age. We practice both child and believer/adult Baptism. Although many parents request the sacrament when their children are very young, Baptism is welcomed and encouraged for anyone at any age desiring to commit themselves to Christ's community. Since children may not understand what is being done and said, their parents and the congregation act and answer on their behalf, vowing to bring the child up in the Christian faith. As a church, we promise to help them and you, and offer our prayer that when a child is old enough to understand, they may choose to profess their faith for themselves.

Should we already be connected with this church?

If you are not already connected with our congregation, we'd love to get to know you, to support you in feeling at home with Christ First, before and after Baptism. You and your family are very welcome at any of our services and gatherings, as a valued part of the faith community.

For children being baptized, parental membership is not required; however we encourage you to consider becoming a member of our church family, that we can support you all in your faith journey. We will be pleased to introduce you to our church family and work with you in getting to know and participate in Christ First's life and work together.

In adult Baptism, the person being baptized professes their faith in Jesus and becomes a Member of the church, and so adults requesting Baptism will be part of an extended period of preparation and study.

How can we stay involved?

Baptism is the first step down a very special journey of faith. We have many opportunities throughout the year for our children and young families to connect with one another, and explore their faith and understanding of the Bible. Our weekly Sunday School classes are one such place, though we also offer a variety of events throughout each season of the church year. If you are willing, our Youth and Family Minister will ensure that you are informed about our upcoming programming for children, and keep you connected with our other young families.

Do we need to live in the surrounding community?

We realize there may be people who are not resident members of this faith community but who have strong family roots and ties to the congregation. We would be happy to baptize children or adults from churches outside our congregation, in consultation with a home church minister.

If you are not participating in a local church, we will assist you in getting connected to a church in your area for ongoing support with a local minister. Our hope is to help you build a continuing, caring connection with a faith community.

Do we need to name Godparents?

Godparents are not a requirement of The United Church of Canada, though you are most welcome to invite Godparents to participate as witnesses. Please include their names on the *Request for Baptism* form, and invite them to be part of preparing for Baptism with you.

Is Dedication possible instead?

Dedication is also an option and our minister will be happy to discuss this further with you. Dedication is held during Sunday worship, as parents ask for God's blessing in raising their child in a Christian home and community. The parents dedicate publicly their child's life to God with the hope that, in years to come, the child will grow to request Baptism. The vows are very similar although no water is used in this service.

Can someone be re-baptized?

While we believe that God celebrates and honours Baptism for a lifetime, we also understand that life or faith circumstances may bring a longing to experience the Sacrament again. Our relationships with the global Christian community draw us instead to an Affirmation of Baptismal Vows, which is similar to an adult's Profession of Faith but offers a distinct liturgy, steeped in the symbolism of water and renewal, celebrating God's unconditional love in the bonds of a faith community. Our ministry team can also plan with individuals or families a re-naming service, for those who have transitioned.

What's next?

If we can be of any further help, please do not hesitate to contact the church office at office@christfirst.ca or **905-822-9834**. Grace, peace, and love be with you as you plan for this wonderful day.