

Barrhaven United Church An Invitation to Baptism or Dedication

Congratulations! We are delighted that you have considered taking a very important step in your faith journey for yourself or on behalf of a child in your care. We hope that this information will help you as you consider baptism in our church.

Having experienced the miracle of expectancy and birth, bonding and belonging, we are led to celebrate these experiences in our life with God, in the Christian community and through baptism.

In these changing times, the Church, like many institutions, is examining its fundamental principles. There is a feeling that time and practice have eroded Biblical and early church experience regarding baptism. We are endeavoring to recapture the meaning and significance of baptism.

Baptism is one of two sacraments within the United Church of Canada--the other being communion. It is administered, therefore, only after ensuring that the baptismal candidate or the persons acting on behalf of the baptismal candidate, appreciate the significance of the vows they will undertake with the congregation.

In the case of the baptism of a child, the parent(s) or guardian, you may come to realize that you can neither in good conscience make the required vows nor honestly ask that the congregation do so as well. You may, nevertheless, wish to celebrate your joy and gratitude for the gift of your child. We, too, wish to share in your thanksgiving and would offer you the opportunity to participate in a dedication service. A Service of Dedication is a separate service of thanksgiving for the life of your child. In time, when commitment is possible and reasonable, you may decide to have your child baptized.

The Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is a symbolic act in which a person is publicly and officially received as a member of the Christian Church and welcomed into its fellowship. Since baptism is an act that involves vows of the entire congregation, it is part of a regular worship service.

Baptism is a genuine action of God when God joins the candidate with the Church, which is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Baptism is the beginning of a new kind of life. Baptism proclaims that each of us is made in the image of God, that God loves us, and proclaims us members of God's family.

Since a child cannot understand what is being done, the parent(s) or guardians act on behalf of the child. You promise to bring the child up in the Christian faith and the congregation promises to help you to do this. We believe that our calling to live in Jesus' Way is proclaim that all are welcome and we strive to make this congregation-this church family a place of safety and belonging for all people.

Requirements for the Baptism of a Child

The sacrament of Baptism is not administered automatically upon request. The United Church of Canada policy as stated in The Manual makes this statement: "The sacrament of baptism in the case of children . . . shall be administered . . . to those children whose parents or guardians, one or both, have been baptized and are confirmed and are members in good standing. The governing body may make exceptions to these requirements."

Because we seek commitment, it is assumed that you are attending regular worship services at Barrhaven United Church and, therefore, are experiencing a sense of belonging in this community of faith. This is so important prior to reaching a decision regarding your commitment to the vows of baptism. It is difficult for children to experience the Christian life if you do not set a faithful example.

During a preliminary meeting (Pre-Baptism Seminar) with the Minister and, normally, a Worship Committee member, an opportunity will be provided to discuss the implications of baptism for you, your child and our congregation. If, after this meeting, the parent(s) and congregation (through a representative) are willing to undertake the necessary commitments, arrangements can be completed. It is our hope that within a year following baptism we might meet, as a follow-up time, to see further the implications of baptism.

For adults seeking baptism, after meeting with the minister and with a Worship Committee Representative, a course of study will be offered by the minister for the inquirer to take. After the course of study is complete and if both parties still feel that baptism is way of life to which God is calling them, then a date will be arranged for the baptism to occur during a Sunday morning Worship service.

Other Questions

How often is the sacrament performed? Usually it is celebrated on the last Sunday of the month.

Does my child need Godparents? No. In our baptismal service the emphasis is put on the commitment of the parents. However, Godparents may stand with the parents and the godparents may wish to make a promise of commitment to the child.

What if I am single or what if my spouse won't participate or is of another church? If possible, we would like to meet with both parents. However, it is sufficient that one parent be active in the United Church and preferably confirmed.

Does BUC baptize the children of parent(s) that identify as LGBTQ+ or adults that are LGBTQ+?

Yes. BUC recognizes and celebrates the uniqueness and the giftedness of all people.

Can photographs be taken during the baptism? No. However, you are welcome after the service to take posed photographs with the minister and furthermore a video may be taken of the baptism during the service if arranged in advance.

We invite you to consider seriously the next steps toward baptism. We would be delighted to see you or your child baptized. May God guide your deliberations and lead you and your family toward Christian discipleship.

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