

Baptism Policy

Meaning of Baptism

The "Song of Faith" of the United Church of Canada states:

*"Before conscious thought or action on our part,
we are born into the brokenness of this world.*

*Before conscious thought or action on our part,
we are surrounded by God's redeeming love.*

*Baptism by water in the name of the Holy Trinity
is the means by which we are received, at any age,
into the covenanted community of the church.
It is the ritual that signifies our rebirth in faith
and cleansing by the power of God.*

*Baptism signifies the nurturing, sustaining,
and transforming power of God's love
and our grateful response to that grace."*¹

The Sacrament of Baptism is the act of accepting God's given title to all individuals – **Beloved**. On the Church's part, this is an act of welcoming, blessing, and belonging.

The Sacrament of Baptism is the rite celebrating the inauguration into the Christian Community, the Church.

There is nothing magical about the Sacrament of Baptism – it is a simple yet sacred act of response to God's Love.

Baptism is also a symbolic action that signifies the new life God gives us as to those who join the church community.

Baptism uses water as a symbolic cleansing element that signifies the acceptance of this new life within the church family.

Persons for whom Baptism is Intended

The United Church offers baptism to all ages. We believe the gift of God's love doesn't depend on our ability to understand it, so we baptize people as infants right up through

¹ United Church of Canada - *A Song of Faith* – 2006 – page 8

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adulthood. With children, instruction is given to parents or godparents (sponsors) to equip them for the child's Christian nurture. During the ceremony, which usually takes place during a regular worship, everyone in the congregation pledges support for the child and their parents².

Regardless of the candidate's age, baptism is accepting the unconditional Love and the Grace of God. It is also a reminder of the wonder, blessing and new responsibilities that come with a new life.

Infants are presented by their parents or guardians in the Christian faith and promise to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and should expect that their children will, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, receive the benefits which the sacrament is designed and fitted to convey.

For adults, baptism is a moving witness to the work of the Holy Spirit in individual and corporate commitment. It is also a celebration of the promise of new life and growth in faith.

Procedure

All who desire to baptize their children or adult individuals who want to be baptized are welcome at Grace United Church.

Contacting the minister, our community of faith, and expressing this desire is the first step.

The minister works closely with the parents or the adult individual and prepare them for this Sacrament.

Baptism is presided by the ordained minister of this community of faith.

The request for Baptism is shared by the ordained minister with the Session of the community of Faith.

Grace United Church offers baptism to all ages, including adults.

For baptisms of infants and young children, we encourage at least one parent to be a member of the United Church of Canada as per United Church Policy.

² Paraphrased – <https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/what-we-believe/baptism-and-communion - June 20, 2021>

Water is used in the Sacrament of Baptism, as a symbolic cleansing that signifies the acceptance of new life within the church family; by baptizing the individuals in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All baptized children are members of the Community of Faith they are baptized in. It is the duty of love and opportunity, when they reach the age of discretion, to enter into full membership. Those received into full membership on profession of faith, and who have not been previously baptized, are received by baptism and confirmation.

The Place of Baptism

Baptism normally takes place within the context of a regular worship celebration, where the promises and commitments of the parents, godparents and the congregation are made, unless there are other circumstances.

Profession of Faith and Promises of the Parents

Parent(s) or Individuals seeking baptism:

- ✚ promise to nurture and guide their child, themselves, in the path of God's Light.
- ✚ promise to live life in the way of Love as demonstrated in the life of Jesus in their private and public life.
- ✚ promise to support the life and work of the church in this community and/or wherever they are found.
- ✚ promise to share their faith with their child and ensure that the Compassionate Teachings of Jesus are planted.

Commitment of the Godparents

- ✚ Godparents are asked if they will grow in faith with this child, trusting that "They are not alone, they live in God's world."
- ✚ Godparents are asked to nurture and influence and support the life of this child and the parents to grow in faith.
- ✚ Godparents are reminded that sharing their faith is the most precious gift to this child and the Church celebrates their witness and commitment.

Congregational Commitment

(Congregation stands as able)

The duty of the Church is to provide Christian instruction to these children/individuals who have been baptized. The members of the congregation commit themselves to support and uphold these children and their parents within the community of faith.

As a baptized and baptizing church, congregational members covenant with the baptismal family, or person, one another, and God.

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They commit anew to nurture and support one another.

The New Creed is read as a Community 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 God³.

³ A New Creed is a brief and well-loved affirmation of faith used widely in our worship (1968; rev. 1980, 1995).

The 20 Articles of Doctrine; A Statement of Faith, 1940; A New Creed; and A Song of Faith are recognized as standards subordinate to the primacy of scripture in the doctrine section of the Basis of Union. (See [The Manual](#), pages 11-28).