

Baptism Policy

St. Andrew's United Church, Georgetown

Overview:

Baptism is a sacred act. It flows from God's grace; an act of welcoming, blessing and belonging that initiates persons into the Church, the Body of Christ. Baptism is a celebration of God's love --- the love that calls us into being, that surrounds us with faithful nurturing that adds fullness to our lives. In infant/child baptism we celebrate the gift of new life. In adult baptism we celebrate the seekers who desire to enter into the life, work, fellowship and mission of the congregation in a deeper way. Both infant/child and adult baptisms proclaim the unconditional love and grace of God!

Policy:

In the United Church, covenants of baptism are part of the worship life of the pastoral charge and come under the responsibility of the Church Board and Worship Leadership Team. The sacrament of infant/child baptism is celebrated at St. Andrew's United Church (Georgetown) as required during the regular Sunday worship service.

At St Andrew's, it is not necessary to be a member of our congregation for a child or adult to be baptized.

If you were confirmed in, or are on the membership roll of another church, you may wish to transfer your membership to St Andrew's at this time. If you do not have a church connection, we invite you to consider joining our church family, as we believe that for baptism to be meaningful, the child and parents, or adult who chooses to be baptized, should bond with our faith community so we can fulfill our baptismal promise – to nurture the child or adult being baptized and to support them in their faith journey.

If you have a family connection with St Andrew's but reside in another community, your child or you, are most welcome to be baptized. As part of the preparation for baptism, our minister will connect you with a United Church congregation near your home so that you may be continued to be nurtured and supported in the Christian faith.

The Next Step:

Those who seek baptism (with parents acting as guardians of young children) should call our church office to set up an appointment with our minister. If several families desire baptisms at the same time of year, a preparation course will be offered to explore the meaning of baptism, the profession of faith and promises that will be made during the sacrament. Otherwise, our minister will meet with each family to discuss baptism so you are comfortable with the symbolism, and sacredness of this act.

Other questions you may have:

Q: What vow will I make at the baptism?

A: The minister will ask you the following questions –

Do you profess your faith in God, your creator, in Jesus Christ your redeemer and in the Holy Spirit your teacher and guide?

For a child baptism:

Will you bring up your child in the knowledge and love of God, teaching him/her the truths and the responsibilities of the Christian faith?

Will you provide a Christian home for her/him, so fashioning your lives that she/he may come to know the love of God?

Or in the case of adult baptism: Will you fashion your life so you can continue to grow in your relationship with God?

Will you encourage him/her to participate in the life of the church, seeking nourishment through Word and Sacrament so that she/he may be strengthened to serve God faithfully in the world?

Or in the case of an adult baptism: Will you participate in the life of the church, seeking nourishment through Word and Sacrament so that you may be strengthened to serve God faithfully in the world?

And then the congregation will promise to **“support him/her with constant love, wholesome example, Christian teaching and faithful prayer”**.

Q: Can we have godparents?

A: The appointment of godparents is an honorary position that has nothing to do with legal guardianship of your child. Godparents may be chosen and they will make a vow during the service to nurture your child in the Christian faith. Historically, the role of “godparents” in the United Church of Canada is filled by the congregation as they take on the roll of providing spiritual guidance, and Christian modeling in the years to come.

Q: What does baptism have to do with the naming the child?

A: The child’s name is chosen by the parent(s) and registered on the birth certificate issued by the provincial government. The child/adult is “named” as part of the baptism sacrament to emphasize that we are bringing this particular child/adult before God and the congregation as one of God’s children, a member of the worldwide Christian church.

Q: Can a single parent (unmarried or formerly married) bring a child for baptism?

A: Yes. The important thing is the commitment the parent is prepared to make.

Q: Why does the United Church still baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? (Trinitarian Formula)

A: In 1975 the members of PLURA (Presbyterian, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches) signed an agreement, acknowledging the Historic and common value of the “matter of baptism” and granting mutual recognition for baptism performed under these signs in each denomination. Thus if later in life your child chooses to become a member of one of the PLURA Churches, they will not have to be baptized again.

In conclusion:

God makes each of us unique and for that we celebrate God’s goodness!
Baptism is not magic. It is a symbolic act that is biblically based which marks the beginning of a child/adult’s life as a follower and friend of Jesus.

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