

Baptism Policy of St. James United Church, Sambro  
The United Church of Canada  
January 2019

Introduction

The Sacrament of Baptism welcomes individuals into the family of God and into the Christian Church. It is a visible sign and seal of God's grace that marks the beginning of a faith journey. Baptism is not 'a naming ceremony' – it serves a religious, not a cultural function. Baptism involves a public profession of faith and promises about following God's way as shown to us in Jesus Christ. In the practice of Infant Baptism, these promises are made on behalf of the child by parents, godparents or sponsors, and congregation.

In baptism we are "incorporated into the Body of Christ," and become members of the world-wide Christian Church. Any unbaptized person may seek baptism in The United Church of Canada. However, the final decision regarding any baptism rests with the Session – the committee of Elders. Baptism cannot proceed without Session approval.

Guidelines

It is our hope that the following guidelines will help in making baptism an inclusive and meaningful experience for all those involved.

- Because baptism is an act of the *baptizing community*, it is understood that the Sacrament of Baptism will be celebrated in the presence of the gathering community – preferably as part of the regular Sunday worship service. The ordained clergy, who administers the sacrament, acts only on behalf of the community. For this reason The United Church of Canada strongly discourages private or home baptisms. Under exceptional circumstances the Session and minister may agree to a private baptism.
- As baptism marks the beginning of the faith journey, at least one parent or guardian should be baptized, confirmed and reasonably involved in the church community. If this is not so, another family member or friend who has been baptized, confirmed and is reasonably involved in the church community is encouraged to take part in the preparation and baptism of the child. It is the responsibility of the family member or friend (if involved), as well as the Session and congregation, to encourage the Christian nurturing of the child.
- Parents and/or candidates are encouraged to attend worship in order to get to know the church community and to become familiar with our style of worship. It also allows the church community to get to know the family of the person being baptized so that the promises made at the time of baptism are more meaningful. In situations where the parents are unable to attend, another family member or friend who has been baptized, confirmed and is reasonably involved in the church community can attend in their place and will then stand with the parents during the baptism.
- Parents and/or candidates must meet with the minister to receive instruction as to the meaning and responsibilities of baptism and its place within the order of service.

Procedure

If a person wishes to be baptized or to have a child baptized, they are to contact the clergyperson for St. James United Church, Sambro. A meeting will be arranged with the clergyperson. The name(s) will then be brought to Session for approval. Following the Session meeting, the clergyperson will contact the inquirer with the Session response, and to set up a date for the baptism.

Picture-taking is not permitted during the baptismal service. If pictures are desired, the participants (ie clergy, Session member) will be available following the service. One stationary and unobtrusive video camera will be permitted. Please speak with the clergy about this option.

In Conclusion

We welcome for baptism all who profess their faith in God and who desire to lead a new life in Jesus Christ, and we welcome their children. The vows taken are noble yet demanding. Though we may sometimes fail, God never fails us but will give us the strength and grace we need for the days and years ahead.