

Vows & Liturgy used at Baptisms

Statement of Purpose:

The sacrament of baptism is the one right of initiation into **membership in the Christian Church**. We are united with Christ, united with one another and the Christian community of every time and place; We are called as disciples of Christ to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit for the work of the church in the world. During this sacrament we all recommit ourselves to this calling.

Promises of Parents
If needed ~ Promises of Godparents
Profession of Faith
Congregational Commitment
Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Pouring of Water
The Act of Baptism
Marking with the Sign of the Cross With Water
Blessing
Presentation of Symbols
Lighting of a Candle
Bible, Prayer Shawl
Congregational Welcome and Walkabout

Liturgy used at Blessings

For families who do not meet the requirements for the Baptism of their child, which is the right of initiation into the membership of the Christian Church, Woodlawn United provides the following options:

- a) in consultation with the ministry team, the parent(s) works to meet the requirements necessary by becoming a confirmed member of Woodlawn United Church themselves,
- b) their child receives a Blessing instead of Baptism.

Blessings are an option for families who have no desire to become members of the church at this point. The purpose of a Blessing is to celebrate the birth of a child and confirm God's unconditional love and blessing for this child. While Baptism take place during worship, Blessings can take place either during worship or in a more private setting. This option preserves the integrity of the parents and the sacrament of Baptism (with all its vows and promises connected to membership).

The Blessing liturgy includes the laying on of hands and prayers as well as making the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child with oil.

The child is presented with a gift to remember this Blessing and a prayer shawl to remind them they are embraced by God and Woodlawn. The parents are given information about Woodlawn United Church and are invited to get to know us better.

Presentation of the Child
Laying on of Hands
Marking with the Sign of the Cross with Oil
Prayer
Prayer Shawl

For more information regarding Baptisms and/or Blessings, please feel free to contact the Woodlawn United Church Office at 902-434-8302 or by email: Office@woodlawnunited.ca



The purpose of this brochure is to help you decide which ritual act you wish to choose for your child.

The Meaning of Baptizing a Child

Baptism, whatever the age of the person being baptized, is the sole rite of initiation into full membership in the Christian community, the Body of Christ. The baptism service celebrates the graceful initiative of God in calling and claiming us, and the faithful response of the people as individuals and as a community. Baptism is a Sacrament of the Church, instituted by Christ. By Baptism we become part of the Church, where we are nourished in faith and life.

The Christian Scriptures do not specifically say that children were baptized. They do suggest, however, that whole households were baptized together, and we assume children were included in that (Acts 16:15; 1 Corinthians 1:16). The New Testament was written during a time when the Church was spreading rapidly, and so, at that time, the Baptism of adults was the most important thing. In the Baptism of anyone, the personal faith of the one being baptized is important.

The water is symbolic of birth into a new kind of life and a new kind of community. The gift of the Holy Spirit which accompanies Baptism gives power to live this new life. The new life is understood as a life of union with Christ and with Christ's people.

New Testament writers speak of that experience in different metaphors; Paul speaks of participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus; John talks of new birth; still others talk of liberation from bondage and of the freedom of a new humanity;

This gift of God in Jesus Christ, celebrated and claimed in Baptism, is the beginning of enduring participation in the journey of God's people towards God's New Creation.

The Meaning of Blessing a Child

"People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them." ~Mark 10:13-17

For families who are not, and do not wish to become, active members of Woodlawn United Church at this time, Woodlawn United offers a Blessing for their child. The purpose of a Blessing is to celebrate the birth of a child and confirm God's unconditional love and blessing for this child. While Baptism takes place during worship, Blessings can take place either during worship or in a more private setting.

The Blessing option preserves the integrity of the parents and the sacrament of Baptism (with all its vows and promises connected to membership).

SOME QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT BAPTISMS AND BLESSINGS

DO I HAVE TO BE A MEMBER OF WOODLAWN UNITED CHURCH (WUC) TO HAVE A CHILD BAPTIZED?

Yes, a requirement for having a child baptized is that at least one of the parents must be a member in good standing at Woodlawn United Church.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER "IN GOOD STANDING" AT WUC?

Baptism is about church membership. Membership is a core identity and is a journey of discipleship. Like the disciples in the Gospels themselves, none of us are perfect or ideal. We are all at different places of understanding, maturity and commitment.

Regardless of where we find ourselves on our faith journey, a member "in good standing" seeks to:

- Have a basic belief in God or the Divine and that Jesus of Nazareth plays a central role in their faith journey.
- Actively seek, as they are able, to deepen their faith through personal and collective study; through prayer and reading scripture; through pursuing answers to questions and obstacles to faith.
- Attend Sunday worship as often as they are able and help build up the community of healing care
- Discern their talents and gifts and answer their 'call'; do their part in the mission and ministry of God, in Christ.
- Support the mission and ministry of the church with their time, talents, and treasure as they are able.

DO YOU HAVE PRIVATE BAPTISMAL/BLESSING SERVICES?

Because Baptism is the Sacrament by which a person becomes part of the Christian community, it is to be celebrated at the regular Sunday service, with the congregation present. However, Blessings can take place either during worship or in a more private setting. If during worship other children present will be offered a blessing as well.

IS THERE A FEE FOR HAVING A CHILD BAPTIZED/BLESSED?

No. Sometimes parents or their families may want to make a donation to the church on this special occasion.

I WANT TO PROTECT THEM FROM GOING TO HELL IF THEY SHOULD DIE.

Many people seek Baptism for their child for this reason. We do not believe, in the United Church of Canada, that God would condemn children to hell because they are not baptized. Baptism is about church membership and choosing to raise your child in the Christian faith.

WHAT IF I LIVE OUT OF TOWN, BUT WANT TO HAVE MY CHILD BAPTIZED/BLESSED AT WUC BECAUSE THIS IS MY "FAMILY CHURCH"?

We would be happy to baptize your child on behalf of the congregation where you presently are a member. Blessings can be done for anyone regardless of where they reside.

WHAT ABOUT GODPARENTS FOR BAPTISMS?

Godparents are welcome. If you have Godparents, we would be happy to incorporate them into the service. In the United Church we believe that the congregation normally assumes that role.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?

Once you have thoroughly read this material, take the time to think and talk about your own relationship with the Church. Decide whether you and your child are ready for membership and discipleship in the church. If you are ready to make this commitment, apply for Baptism. However, if you are not ready for this step at this time, the Blessing of your child should be what is requested.

SHOULD I CHOOSE BAPTISM OR BLESSING FOR MY CHILD?

I WANT TO GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR MY CHILD'S BIRTH.

Blessing your child is a great way to give thanks for their birth. This is done as part of a Blessing or Baptism. Baptism is about much more than this however. It is about membership in the church.

I WANT MY CHILD TO BE ABLE TO BE MARRIED IN THIS CHURCH

Whether your child eventually wishes to marry as a Christian or not will be their own decision when the time comes. We do not require baptismal certificates for marriage.

DO YOU ONLY BAPTIZE CHILDREN?

Adult baptism is not only the original form of Christian Baptism, it is a profoundly significant experience for those who decide on their own to be members of the church. We baptize people of all ages.

I WANT MY CHILD BAPTIZED JUST BECAUSE IT IS A TRADITION OF OUR FAMILY.

The tradition of Baptism without any commitment to Christ and the Church is a total misunderstanding of Baptism. Perhaps, a Blessing would be a better option for your family.

MY CHILD'S GRANDPARENTS WOULD BE UPSET IF THEY WERE NOT BAPTIZED.

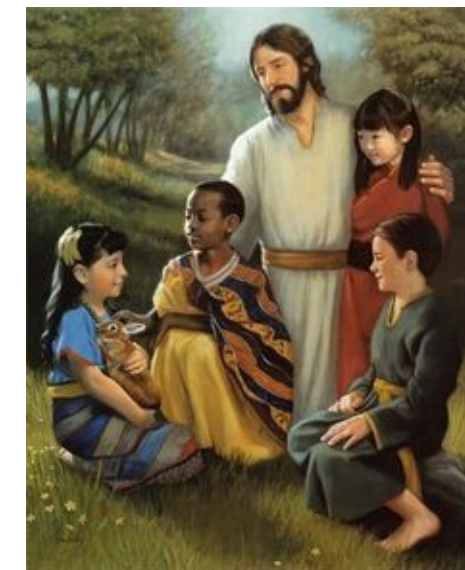
In most cases, it is you, their parents, and not their grandparents, who must give them a Christian upbringing if they are baptized. No matter what others think or feel, the decision must be yours. Again, if this is the reason you are seeking Baptism, we would suggest that Blessing would be the better option.

I WANT TO GIVE THEM A CHRISTIAN NAME AT THE BAPTISM

In other faith traditions, this is called Christening, and is not a part of our United Church tradition.

If you would like to continue with the baptism/blessing, fill out the attached forms, sign them, and email back to our office. The Minister will then contact you to book an appointment. The church office number is 902-434- 8302. Email is office@woodlawnunited.ca

Baptisms & Blessings



"Let the little children come to me for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"
- Matthew 19:14

