



*Baptism
of a Child*

Introduction

Baptism is a sacrament of the church. It is not a private ceremony. It takes place within the context of congregational worship in the church attended by the child and her/his parent(s). If in exceptional circumstances baptism occurs elsewhere, the presbyter should ensure that representatives of the congregation are present if at all possible.

Those parents or guardians requesting baptism for their child would normally be baptised Christians who are actively involved in the life of the church. It is the responsibility of the presbyter administering the sacrament to ensure that they, and any godparents, have been thoroughly prepared beforehand and are aware of their responsibility to nurture the child in the Christian faith.

Candidates for baptism must be approved by the Leaders' Meeting/Parish Council. After baptism their names are entered in the baptismal register and a Certificate of Baptism is presented.

The font should occupy a prominent place within the church building and be large enough to hold a substantial quantity of water.

The Baptism Service may be followed by Holy Communion.

Commentary

Baptism and Holy Communion are the two sacraments celebrated by our Church. Baptism is the sacrament of Christian initiation. In baptism God's presence is made known to us through the symbolism of water, the words of scripture, the action of the church and the faith of the participants.

Grace, the unearned love of God, precedes and awakens faith.

Baptism is not an end in itself; it looks ahead to a life-long journey of Christian faith and discipleship. It represents one step in an ongoing process of growth and discovery.

The New Testament gives the church its authority to baptise. (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-39, 42)

Baptism is the sign of inclusion in God's new covenant with the church, the body of Christ, in whom there is no longer, Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female. (Gal 3:28)

Through the goodness of God we are offered the possibility of afresh start at any stage of life.

Children nurtured in a loving Christian environment can, like adults, have a ministry to others even though they may not be conscious of it at the time.

Order of Service for the Baptism of a Child

The family and friends of the child brought for baptism are welcomed at the beginning of the service. Leadership of the service may be shared by the presbyter and a lay leader. A baptismal hymn may be sung at an appropriate point. Children may be invited to come forward and gather around the font.

Presbyter: Once when people brought their babies to Jesus to be blessed, his disciples wanted to send them away, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the **kingdom of God belongs.**" (Luke 18:15-16).

.....we **are glad** you have brought.....to be baptised today.

Baptism is God's gift to us.

It is God who takes the initiative;

God chooses us.

Long before we can understand or respond,

God knows and loves each one of us

and wants to be known and loved by us.

Baptism marks and celebrates the gracious,

transforming work of God within us,

not just in the moment of baptism itself

but throughout the whole of life.

Leader: From the very beginning of the Christian community, people have been received into the church through baptism. Children belong in the community of faith which is centred on Jesus Christ.

Through baptism they become members of the church,

God's covenant people,

and are united with Christians of every time and place.

Human life is marked by brokenness and inadequacy

but forgiveness and new life in Christ

are available to all who are open to receive them.

Little children do not understand this yet,

but their parents and the church together

affirm their faith in God

and promise to nurture them in this faith,

so that as members of the Body of Christ

they may learn to love and serve God all their life.

The creeds are not a definition but, rather, a witness of the church (in the language of the day) to God's saving action in creation and human history. The Apostles' Creed was not written by the Apostles; it was developed in the early church over a period of centuries. Originally it was used as a declaration of faith at baptism, which usually took place at Easter after a lengthy period of preparation.

The Affirmation is a contemporary declaration of faith originating from the United Church of Canada.

Presbyter: Let us affirm the faith declared in our baptism:

STAND

APOSTLES' CREED

**We believe in God,
the Father Almighty
creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived
by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died
and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand
of the Father,
and he will come to judge
the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

AFFIRMATION

Leader: We are not alone - we
live in God's world
All. **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 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 God.**

SIT

The parent(s) or guardians are invited to come forward with the child, together with other family members (and godparents if desired).

Leader: (to the parents) ..., what do you ask of the church?

Parents: We ask thatbe baptised.

Parents have the primary responsibility to nurture their child in the faith, as much by the way they live as by the words they say.

Christ is honoured in many ways - such as when we give thanks before meals, join in family prayers, celebrate the festivals of the church and the anniversaries of baptism in appropriate ways, and set aside time each day to listen to the child's concerns.

At confirmation we reaffirm our baptism and are ordained to a more intentional form of lay ministry and witness.

The use of godparents (or sponsors) approved by the Leaders' Meeting/Parish Council is optional. When used, godparents/sponsors should be included in the discussions and preparations for the baptism service.

In baptism we are adopted into the world-wide Christian family and become part of a rich tradition passed on to us by all who have gone before us in the faith. Together with the parents, the church accepts the responsibility to nurture the growing child, and to value all children and young people and ensure that they always feel welcome and included in the worship and life of the church.

Statement of intent by the parents *or* the following vows:

Leader: You have acknowledged with us your faith in God.

Do you now entrustto God's loving embrace?

Parents: We do.

Leader: Will you share in worship and the life of the church,
so thatwill always know she/he belongs within it?

Parents: We will.

Presbyter: Will you make your home a place where Christ is honoured
and wheremay grow in love and faith?

Parents: We will, with God's help.

Presbyter: *Will you* by your example encourage
to share in the celebration of Holy Communion
and the service of God in the world,
and to come to the confirmation of her/his baptism?

Parents: We will, with God's help.

To the godparents (if applicable)

Presbyter: As godparents will you lovingly guide
and give your support to her/his family,
so that she/he may grow in Christian faith?

Godparents: We will, with God's help.

CONGREGATION STANDS

Leader: *(to the people)* As members of Christ's universal church
you are about to receiveinto membership.
Will you surroundand her/his family with love,
nurture and encourage her/him in the faith,
and with God's help make this a place
where all may grow in the knowledge
and love of Christ?

People: **We will. With great joy we welcome.....into the church.**

CONGREGATION SITS

*God's Spirit enables us to enter into the richer,
fuller life which Jesus promised (John 10: 10)*

Genesis I

Exodus 14:21-22

Joshua 1: 10- 11

Matthew 3:13-17

John 4: 10, 13-14

Paul links baptism with the death and resurrection of Christ to illustrate the radically different way of life that commitment to Christ involves. (Romans 6:3-4) It is the church's prayer that every child who is baptised will grow to live in the way of Christ.

Before the baptism the presbyter may say:

*..... for you Jesus Christ has come,
he lived on the earth,
and suffered on the cross.*

For you he cried, "It is accomplished!"

For you he died;

for you he was raised from the dead.

For you he lives now

*and has promised to be with you for ever,
even though you do not know it.*

The Baptism

Leader: Flowing water is the central symbol of baptism.
It is a sign of life and growth, of freshness and delight,
of cleansing and new beginnings,
of God's Holy Spirit poured out
on those who belong to Christ.

Water is poured into the font by a member of the congregation.

Presbyter: Eternal God,
we thank you for the gift of water.
When nothing existed but chaos,
you swept across the waters of creation
and brought forth life;
when you saw your people as slaves in Egypt,
you led them to freedom through the sea;
across the river Jordan you led Israel
to the land you promised.

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus,
nurtured in the waters of a womb;
in the Jordan he was baptised by John
and anointed by your Spirit;
at the well in Samaria he offered the gift of living water;
his followers are called to share the baptism
of his death and resurrection
and to make disciples of all nations.

By the power of your Holy Spirit,
bless this water and the child who is baptised in it,
that she/he may be born of water and the Spirit,
be raised to new life in Christ
and strengthened to serve you in the world.
To you be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

The congregation may be invited to stand. The presbyter receives the child from the parents and pours or liberally sprinkles water from the font over the child's head three times, with these words:

..... I baptise you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

For some the sign of the cross is a mark of our identity, a sign that we belong to God.

Christ is the Light of the World, and his followers too are called to give light to all. John 8:12; Matthew 8:14-16) Some find it a helpful custom to light the baptismal candle on each anniversary of the baptism.

While God's faithfulness towards us never changes, our commitment to God needs to be renewed continually. The church gives us the opportunity to do this at every baptism and communion service, at the covenant service, at confirmation and, indeed, on every occasion we meet for worship.

The presbyter may make the sign of the cross on the child's forehead and say:

....., from this day on

the sign of the cross is upon you.
Remember always that you are a child of God.

Presbyter: Through the waters of birth
you were brought into the world.
Through the waters of baptism
you have been brought into the church.

A lighted candle may be presented to the child.

Presbyter:walk in the way of Christ.
Shine with the light of Christ.
The grace of Christ attend you;
the love of God surround you;
the Holy Spirit keep you,
this day and for ever. Amen.

CONGREGATION SITS

The presbyter may carry or take the child around the congregation.

Leader: Let us pray:
We thank you, loving God, for the miracle of birth,
for the gift of children and the richness
that family life can bring.
Bless.....and her/his family. Give to(parents)
the faith and wisdom to fulfil their responsibility.

People: **We remember with gratitude
our own baptism.
Help us to live lives
worthy of this high calling.**

Presbyter. May your Spirit continually be at work in us so
that we may be channels of love and peace.
Amen.

The child's name may be entered in the baptismal register at this point. The baptismal certificate is presented by a lay leader.

Acknowledgments

The Christian Church has a rich heritage of liturgies and prayers that have influenced our spirituality and helped to shape contemporary orders of service. It is almost inevitable that we will have unconsciously incorporated echoes from some of these in our liturgies. We apologise if we have unknowingly used material written by others without acknowledging its source. The prayer of thanksgiving on p.9 appears in a variety of forms in liturgies around the world. The final section is adapted from *Uniting in Worship*, ©The Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Commission on Liturgy 1988.

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