

Baptism at St. Andrew's United Church

Please contact the church if you would like to consider baptism for your child or yourself and a date will be selected. You will need to meet with the minister at least once for a baptism of a child and at least twice, possibly more for an adult baptism. This may require baptism/confirmation classes if they are being offered at the time otherwise something will be worked out between the person wanting baptism/confirmation and the minister.

There is no cost for baptism in the church.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

In the United Church there are four different theologies around Baptism. The first is a theology of Grace when people say that no matter what, God's love is most

important and we as a church act as a vehicle for that grace. So therefore, the point of baptism from a grace-theology point of view is to be sure that each child or adult who received baptism hears good news and knows him or herself as beloved of God. This viewpoint means that baptism expresses outreach.

The second position that has been dominant in the United Church views baptism as covenant. Traditionally, covenant theology connects with the idea of baptism as entry to the church. Baptism incorporates people as members of the church. In this view, the church forms the locus of god's activity. Covenant theology implies that people must understand and commit themselves to the promises they are making in the service of baptism. People with a Covenant theology of baptism would like people to only bring their child for baptism if their actions show commitment to faith and interest in the church.

A third position in the United Church is a theology of belonging. This stresses the action of the Christian

community in baptism instead of the focus being simply on the individual being baptized. This baptism brings us into community with Christ and with one another and calls for an end to all our differences. For this position, the goal of baptism is initiation into a community of faith, a church. It is entrance into a way of life together. Baptism is the church's proclamation and experience that we are who we are because God as first chosen us and loved us and called us into God's kingdom. Therefore the burden of baptism is more on the baptizers than the ones being baptized.

The Fourth view of baptism in the United Church is one of Rite of Passage. From this view point, all human cultures have some means of acknowledging birth. Thus baptism is the ritual by which the Christian church acknowledges the birth of a child. People who hold a grace theology are more tolerant of baptism as a rite of passage than are those with covenanting and belonging theologies. From the point of view of grace, the pastoral needs of those seeking baptism receive credibility. Good

theology is not as important as providing an event whereby people may experience the real love of God. All of the above viewpoints have their strengths and weaknesses. All continue to inform United Church congregations and their elders as they find ways to express their faithfulness in relation to the sacrament of baptism. In some cases they overlap and in others they cause tension.

In the United Church, we have baptism services within the setting of a congregation, public worship. Since it is an act of the whole people of God, it is important that the vows be said and heard within a public service.

Service of Baptism

The vows that we say in Baptism differ from church to church and from minister to minister. For us here at St. Andrew's United Church, I use the following Vows:

Parents: Do you see the act of baptism as a symbol of our celebration of the life of your children, filled as they

already are with the spirit of the Divine. If so please say, we do. We do

Parents: Do you believe that as we share the stories of life, yours, ours, those of our children, and those of people of wisdom and faith who have gone before us, that we come to know the divine more fully? If so please say, we do. We do.

Parents: Do you commit yourselves and _____ to a journey of the spirit within the faith community, seeking to find and nurture the wholeness within each of you and our world? If so please say we do. We do

P: Will you try to bring _____ up in a family and a home that will shower them with the values of unconditional love and forgiveness? We will

Congregational commitment: (please stand) We gather at this font to celebrate the Spirit of life that connects us all and through which we come to love ourselves, one another and the whole of creation. This font and the

water in it are our symbols of community and our common need for the refreshing waters of the spirit. Each of you, whole and loved knows the need for support and care upon the spiritual journey. As this family gathers to commit to this journey, let us pledge our care to them. Do you who witness this commitment of faith pledge to love, support and care for all children as they discover the way that the Spirit unfolds in their lives? We do.

Pouring of water: We give thanks this day for the gift of water. This font and the water poured into it are our symbols of community and our common need for the refreshing waters of the Spirit. Through water we are born, of water we are made, by water we are sustained.

Act of Baptism _____, I baptize you in the name of life who created you, Wisdom who knew you first, Hope by which you shall be sustained, Delight in who I pray you to live. And I baptize you in the name of Love which completes you. May you live every day in its embrace. And as our tradition requires I say the formal

words, I baptize you in the name of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit.

Laying on of hands: _____: may the Holy Spirit, Love's power, guide you, inspire you, and work within you, all the days of your life.

Giving of the white stole: _____, may this stole be for you a symbol of the love given to each one of us on our journey of faith.

Lighting of Candle: _____, let your light shine before others that they may see your good works, and give glory to God

Present the child to the congregation

If you are an adult to be baptized, the vows will be rewritten to suit.

