When You Are Considering

Baptism

for Your Child

WESTMINSTER UNITED CHURCH

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The Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is a response that followers of Jesus make to the Good News of God's love that Jesus shared and lived. God, who made us, and sustains our life, comes to us in friendship and love. This is made known to us in the story of Jesus of Nazareth. We believe that Jesus shows us how entirely God is committed to our well being, and how God invites us to follow the way of love.

Jesus began and continues to draw all kinds of people into the living fellowship of those who trust themselves to his way, who in doing so find meaning and fulfillment in life. Baptism is the special ritual, or sacrament, of entry into this fellowship.

This makes Baptism a crucial moment in life. It is an occasion for the affirmation of faith in God through Jesus Christ. And it is also the public declaration of a commitment to follow God throughout all of life.

The Baptism of your child is an extension of the offer of Baptism that was originally given to adults. Therefore it is appropriate only in situations in which the faith and commitment of the parents is such that they desire that their children be welcomed into the church with them through this same sacrament.

What am I really saying when I bring my child for baptism?

To put it most simply you are saying, "Christian faith and the church are important within my life and I want to raise my child within this faith, with the help of God and the church."

Parents bring their children to be baptized so that they may be celebrated and formally welcomed into the community of faith in which they will grow up.

Thoughts to Ponder Concerning Your Own Journey of Faith

"Do I truly desire for myself what I am asking for my child?"

"Can I commit my child to anything more than I am committed to myself?"

"Am I willing to support the congregation as it seeks to fulfill its responsibilities for my child and all other children under its care?"

"Am I willing to affirm the importance of the community of faith by being part of it with my child?"

Baptism marks the beginning of your child's new life in Christ and for Christ. Its effectiveness is in your promise that your child will be brought up in the knowledge and love of God, being nurtured in a household of love and in the community of faith; and in God's promise to be your God and the God of your children.

Some Common Questions and Concerns

1. I WANT TO HAVE OUR CHILD BAPTIZED, AND AM PREPARED TO MAKE THE PROFESSION OF FAITH AND PROMISES, BUT MY PARTNER IS NOT.

This is not a problem, as long as your spouse will support you in your wish to raise the child within the Community of Faith. You can make the promises on your own, or have your partner stand beside you without making the vows, as a sign of support. There are alternative affirmations that he or she may feel free to make. An example is given at the end of this brochure.

2. MY PARTNER IS FROM A DIFFERENT CHURCH.

Baptism is the one Sacrament we share with all Christians.

3. WE DO NOT GO TO CHURCH, BUT WE WANT TO HAVE OUR CHILD BAPTIZED.

It is important that you teach your child by word and example that Christian faith and church involvement are important. If you do not attend church, your lack of involvement is telling your child that church is not important in spite of what your words may be saying to him or her. Also, you are really affirming for your child, or asking your child to affirm, something that you are not willing, at this point, to affirm for yourself. Please consider being a part of the church with your child.

4. ALL OF MY FAMILY HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED AT WESTMINSTER UNITED CHURCH. WE DON'T LIVE IN THE AREA, BUT WE WILL BE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS; CAN WE HAVE OUR BABY BAPTIZED THEN?

It is preferable that a child be baptized in the Church in which they will grow up and in which you as parents are involved. The Church that you now attend is the one that will be fulfilling the supportive role of assisting you in the Christian education of your children. It would be better if that congregation also had the privilege of welcoming your child through Baptism.

5. WHAT ABOUT GODPARENTS?

In recent years the role of godparents has been gradually transferred within the United Church to the whole congregation in which a child is baptized. That is why the congregation is asked during a Baptism service if they will receive "these children and assist with the Christian training of all children under (their) care." We will, however, still invite parents to select godparents if they wish to do so.

These persons must, however, be prepared to profess their own Christian faith and their willingness to support you in the Christian training of your child. They will be asked to do so during the service of Baptism.

The Questions and Promises

You have the opportunity to choose one of three orders of service for baptism with regard to the affirmation of faith and the promises that you will make at the baptism of your child. They are identified as: Traditional Order, Contemporary Order, and Custom Contemporary Order.

The Traditional Order

I ask you before God and this congregation, do you confess your faith in God, your heavenly father, in Jesus Christ your saviour and Lord, and in the Holy Spirit your teacher and guide?

Answer: I DO

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

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

Will you make a Christian home for him/her, so fashioning your lives that he/she may come to know Christ as his/her Lord and saviour?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

Will you encourage him/her to seek confirmation, so that, being strengthened in faith by the Holy Spirit, he/she may go forth to serve God faithfully in the world?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

The Contemporary Order

Do you believe in God and in God's love?

Answer: YES, WE DO.

Do you believe that God has come to us in Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and died and lives again?

Answer: YES, WE DO.

Do you believe that God, by the Holy Spirit, is active in the world to direct and strengthen you?

Answer: YES, WE DO.

Will you do your best to provide a Christian home for your child, and will you encourage him/her to seek confirmation?

Answer: YES, WE WILL.

(Optional) Commitment of Godparents

Will you pray for this/these child(ren)
and take care that he/she/they may learn and live the faith?

ANSWER: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

The Custom Contemporary Order

With this option you are asked to choose 4 questions; one from each of 4 sections pertaining to faith and promise.

Choose one question from each of sections A through D. In addition, a question from section E may be chosen if you have selected godparents.

SECTION A. Profession of Faith in the Triune God

1. Do you believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Answer: I DO, BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

OR

2. Do you believe in God, who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, and who works in us and others by the Spirit?

Answer: I DO, BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

OR

3. Do you believe in God, source of love; in Jesus Christ, love incarnate; and in the Holy Spirit, love's power?

Answer: I DO, BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

SECTION B. Commitment to Follow the Way of Jesus Christ

1. Will you turn to Jesus Christ, accepting him as Saviour and Lord?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

OR

2. Will you proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, in your words and actions?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

OR

3. Will you follow the way of Jesus Christ?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

SECTION C. Commitment to the Mission and Ministry of the Church

1. Will you join with your brothers and sisters in this congregation to share in the life, work, and ministry of Jesus Christ?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

OR

2. Will you join with your brothers and sisters in this community of faith to celebrate God's presence, live with respect in creation, and love and serve others?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

SECTION D. Commitment of Parent(s)

1. Baptism, marks an important beginning step in your child's journey of faith. Will you care for him/her, and help him/her to take his/her place within the mission and witness of Christ's Church.

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

OR

2. Will you share your faith with your child, by your words and actions, growing with him/her in faith, hope and love, and walking with him/her in the way of Jesus?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

SECTION E. (Optional) Commitment of Godparents

1. Will you pray for this/these child(ren) and take care that he/she/they may learn and live the faith?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

OR

2. Will you grow in faith with this child, trusting that, "you are not alone, you live in God's world"?

Answer: I WILL, GOD BEING MY HELPER.

Additional Option

In a situation in which one parent wants to affirm the faith and promises of the baptism services but the other partner does not feel that he or she is able to, this partner may be given the opportunity to affirm the following promises.

A question to be asked of both parents:

Minister: _____ and _____ do you promise to raise n in a household that is filled with love, and will you help him/her to become all that he/she is capable of being?

Parents: WE DO.

A question to be asked of parent not affirming Christian faith:

Minister: _____, will you support _____ as he/she endeavours to fulfil the promises he/she has just made?

Parent: I DO.

Introducing Your Child

On the Sunday of your child's Baptism we include a special insert in the church bulletin introducing the children being baptized to the congregation.

We like to include the child's full name, age, parent's names, and any other information that you might feel is descriptive of your child. For example, you may want to say that your child is your second child and first grand-daughter for grandparents George and Mary Jones. You might want to include something about your family, such as; you have just recently moved to Oshawa or that one or both of you grew up in Westminster congregation and were married here.

Here are a couple of samples:

MICHELLE LEANNE BENNS is the 4 month old daughter of Bill and Sharon Benns. She is their first child. Michelle is the second grandchild of Brian and Bernice Shaule of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and first grandchild of Steven and Dorothy Benns of Thornhill, ON. Bill and Sharon have recently moved to Oshawa and hope to make Westminster United their home church.

ROBERT JAMES COOKSON is the son of Jim and Heather Cookson, and baby brother to sisters Amanda and Corrie. Robert was born on Easter Sunday two months ago. He is a delight to his parents and sisters, and to his grandparents, Richard and Jan Cookson, and Glen and Mary Scott.

We would like to have you write something similar regarding your child that we can add to the special bulletin insert on baptism Sunday. Please e-mail it to us at wuc@westminster-uc.ca one week prior to baptism Sunday.