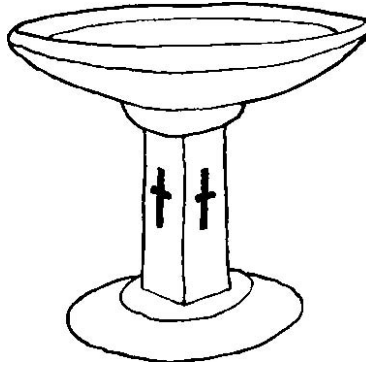


*When You Are Considering
Baptism
for Your Child*



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CONGRATULATIONS

If you are reading this brochure it is most likely because you have recently had a new baby and are considering a service of baptism for him or her. If this is the case, we want to say congratulations on the birth of your child. This is an exciting time (and sometimes also an anxious time) in your life. We, as a church family, want to be here with, and for, you. This brochure contains information that you will find helpful in thinking about and planning for the Baptism of your child.

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 and 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 infants* 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.

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!

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."

Often parents feel pressure from within themselves, or from family and friends, to have their child "done." These pressures may cause parents to seek the baptism of their child for reasons other than wanting to raise their child within the Christian faith.

SOME "OTHER" REASONS WE OFTEN HEAR INCLUDE:

1. TO GIVE THANKS FOR OUR CHILD'S BIRTH.

Although thanksgiving is a part of a Baptism Service, Baptism is much more than this. There are services of "Thanksgiving for the birth of a child." If this is your only concern, then you may want to consider asking for such a service.

2. **SO OUR CHILD CAN GO TO SUNDAY SCHOOL.**

You need to know that Baptism is not a pre-requisite for attendance at Sunday School. We welcome all children to our Sunday School and Church. No child is ever turned away because he/she is not baptized.

3. **TO PROTECT OUR CHILD FROM GOING TO HELL IF HE OR SHE SHOULD DIE.**

Unfortunately, parts of the church seem to have sometimes given this impression in times past. This thinking does not coincide with the teachings of Jesus. Any God who condemns children simply because they have not been baptized would not be the God of Jesus Christ.

4. **SO OUR CHILD CAN BE MARRIED IN THE CHURCH WHEN THE TIMES COMES.**

In the United Church of Canada Baptism is not a pre-requisite for being married in the church. It may be in some other denominations.

5. **TO SAVE OUR CHILD THE EMBARRASSMENT OF BEING BAPTIZED WHEN OLDER.**

Baptism ought not to be an embarrassment at any age. It is a wonderful celebration of God's love for us. It is important to remember that Adult Baptism is the original form of Christian Baptism. The first people baptized were adults who decided for themselves that they wanted to be baptized. Baptism is a profoundly significant experience for the person who decides on his/her own to be a Christian and to declare and celebrate this decision publicly in the congregation of his/her church.

6. **BECAUSE IT IS A TRADITION IN OUR FAMILY.**

Some families may have adopted a tradition of having children baptized ("done") while having no previous or on-going connection to the church that administers the sacrament. In other words, baptism has become for them a private family affair. If this is the case, then the meaning of Baptism has been lost and the sacrament is being abused. Baptism is about being a part of Christ's family, the church, and learning and growing within the Christian faith.

7. **THE GRANDPARENTS WOULD BE UPSET IF OUR CHILD WAS NOT BAPTIZED.**

It is difficult for us, even as adults, to deal with parental pressure. However, it is you, the child's parents, and not the grandparents, who have primary responsibility for your child, and who will be the most influential in forming and guiding your child's life. The decision really needs to be yours, no matter what others think or feel. If church or faith are not important to you now, it is ok not to have your child baptized.

8. **TO OFFICIALLY GIVE OUR CHILD A NAME.**

Your child officially receives his/her name when the birth is registered with the provincial and federal governments. This is not what Baptism is for.

9. **BECAUSE THE OTHER CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY ARE BAPTIZED AND WE DO NOT WISH TO HAVE ONE LEFT OUT.**

If the rest of the family is already a part of the worshipping congregation, then indeed you cannot "leave this one out". However, if this is not the case, then in a real sense, they have all been "left out" because none are being nurtured as active participants in the church family. Baptism is always Baptism into a community of faith. It pre-supposes ongoing involvement with the community of faith.

10. **TO GIVE OUR CHILD A GOOD START.**

If you follow through on the promises you will take at the Baptism of your child, then you will indeed give him/her "a good start." However, the ceremony on its own without the follow-through would only be a "false start" because it does not lead to something more.

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?"

REMEMBER:

Baptism is not magic. It is not a spiritual inoculation to protect your child against mysterious evils. It is much more than a socially approved means of public name-giving.

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 HUSBAND/WIFE IS FROM A DIFFERENT CHURCH.***

Baptism is the one Sacrament we share with all Christian churches. It would be helpful, however, for you to find out from both churches what Baptism involves.

3. ***ACTUALLY, WE ARE NOT TOO SURE ABOUT BAPTISM — OUR PARENTS/IN-LAWS ARE PUSHING US.***

You are the ones who will make the vows; and it is your right as parents to decide how you want to raise your children. If you are not sure about Baptism, we would recommend that you wait until such time as when you do feel more certain. Your parents/in-laws might like to read this brochure and/or talk to the minister.

4. ***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.

5. ***WHY HAVE THE CHURCHES BECOME SO STRICT ABOUT BAPTISM? AT ONE TIME, EVERYONE HAD THEIR CHILDREN BAPTIZED.***

In the past, a majority of people attended Church. This is not the case today. A person should not make a solemn vow before God to bring his/her child up in the Church and yet not be involved in the Church. If you are not interested in being a part of the Church, it would be better to wait and let your child decide later for him/her self.

6. ***ALL OF MY FAMILY HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED AT HARMONY 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 he/she 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.

7. ***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.

BAPTISM SPONSORS

Harmony United Church has recently begun a new program that we call our "Baptism Sponsorship Program." We assign a member of the congregation to keep in touch with the family of a newly baptized child, offering friendship, care and support on behalf of our congregation for a period of 3 years. We call these folks "Baptism sponsors." You will most likely meet these sponsors at the baptism rehearsal.

THE QUESTIONS AND PROMISES

You have the opportunity to choose one of three (3) 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. They are as follows.

THE TRADITIONAL ORDER

asks parents to answer the following questions:

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

asks parents to answer the following questions:

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**

THE CUSTOM CONTEMPORARY ORDER

asks you 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?
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?
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?
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?
I will, God being my helper.

OR

2. Will you proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, in your words and actions?
I will, God being my helper.

OR

3. Will you follow the way of Jesus Christ?
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?
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?
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.
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?
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?
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"?
I will, God being my helper.

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: *N* and *n* 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 *N* will you support *n* 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 baby'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 Harmony congregation and were married here.

Here are a couple of samples:

MICHELLE LEANNE BENNS is the 4 month old daughter of Bill and Sharon Bennis. 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 Bennis of Thornhill, ON. Bill and Sharon have recently moved to Oshawa and hope to make Harmony United their home church. **ROBERT JAMES COOKSON** is the son of Bill 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 mail, fax, or e-mail it to us one week prior to baptism Sunday, or bring it with you to the baptism rehearsal.



BAPTISM SUNDAYS

1. The 2nd Sunday in January.
2. Mother's Day
3. Thanksgiving.
4. Additional Sundays if required

Applications for Baptism are to be received by the 15th day of the month prior to the Baptism.
(i.e.) Dec 15, April 15, Sept 15