

BAPTISM POLICY

This policy represents the intention of Central United Church (Central) with regard to the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND BELIEF

Baptism is a sacrament of the church. Baptism signifies *the nurturing, sustaining and transforming power of God's love and our grateful response to that grace (Song of Faith, a Statement of Faith of The United Church of Canada, 2006)*. We also believe that people who die without baptism are in no way condemned, lost or damned. It is our belief that all of us, from the moment of our conception until we move into the arms of God beyond death, are beloved children of God.

Baptism in the United Church of Canada (UCC) is recognized by all denominations of the Christian church that practice infant, child, youth or adult baptism. Similarly, if someone has been baptized in another church at any age, the UCC recognizes that baptism and welcomes those persons into the Community of Faith (COF) of Central.

Baptism is a transformative sacrament in which water is sprinkled on the forehead of an infant, child, youth or adult, as the visible sign of the unconditional love and grace that God pours out upon us. It is a ritual signifying the new or renewed life God gives to us, replicating the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan in which he experienced the transformative power of God, calling him into his ministry. In the case of an infant or child, it is the rite of initiation into the worldwide Christian faith community. In the case of a youth or adult, it is the ritual that signifies membership into a specific United Church, in this case, Central.

While it is common practice to administer the waters of Baptism through sprinkling, it is also possible for a youth or adult baptismal candidate to be baptized through full immersion.

POLICY

- (a) Any infant, child, youth, or adult is eligible for baptism at Central, upon request.
- (b) The Minister(s) of Central generally administer the sacrament, however, if a family member of the child or adult presented for baptism is a duly recognized clergyperson from another United Church or other Christian denominations that practice Baptism, such a person may enact the sacrament. Permission for such individuals to perform the baptism must be granted by the Board.



- (c) Candidates for baptism or their parents must attend a Baptismal Class conducted by the Minister(s) of Central or their appointed representative(s), prior to the baptism.
- (d) In the case of subsequent requests for baptism from the same family, attendance at another Baptismal Class is not required.
- (e) Persons requesting baptism for an infant or child must have been baptized themselves or be willing to be baptized before their infant or child can be baptized.
- (f) Parents can name Godparents for their child, however, in the tradition of the UCC, the COF serves as the Sponsor for each child or adult. The Minister(s) enacts the sacrament on behalf of the COF, with the faith community giving permission for the Minister(s) to do so. The COF also publicly promises to support infants, children, youth, adults, and their families as they grow in faith.
- (g) The Sacrament of Baptism is administered in a public service of worship so the parents, guardians, or legal representatives of an infant or child are able to make a public profession of faith on their behalf. Youth and adults make a public profession of faith on their own behalf, also at a public service of worship.
- (h) Baptism may be administered in a private setting if the health of the infant, child, youth, adult or a close family member is at risk. In such instances, a member of Central is asked to be present to witness the baptism on behalf of the COF.
- (i) If the Sacrament of Baptism is administered in a setting other than Central, the Minister(s) must obtain permission from the Board to conduct the baptism. Such permission shall be waived in the case of an emergency (e.g., a hospital, a hospice).
- (j) All baptisms must be duly recorded in the Baptism Register of Central.
- (k) No fees shall be charged for baptism.
- (l) Release of baptismal information is restricted to the parents, guardians or legal representatives of an infant, child, or youth. The release of baptismal information is also restricted to the adult who has been baptized. The UCC is able to access baptismal information, solely for statistical and record-keeping purposes. No outside agency may gain access to baptismal information based on the principles of the UCC Privacy Statement and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Document Act (PIPEDA), as well as other federal and provincial privacy legislation.
- (m) Central shall provide opportunities for youth to confirm the baptismal vows made on their behalf when they were infants by offering Confirmation Classes on a timely basis. The confirmation includes a public profession of faith, therefore, granting church membership to the candidate.



ADMINISTRATION

This policy is administered by the Worship Team, working in collaboration with the Congregational Care Team.

The Administrative Team shall record, in the Baptism Register, all baptisms conducted at Central. The Administrative Team will also ensure that completed Baptism Registers are sent, in a timely manner, to the Provincial Archives of the UCC located in Edmonton.

This policy document is a living document and can be changed at any time, with the approval of the Board.

The Board must inform the congregation about the policies that have been established by the Board and will seek ratification of each policy change at an Annual Congregational Meeting.

Final Draft approved by the Board, June 10th, 2018. Revised May 8th, 2019

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