



Celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism

St. Mark's United Church 115 Orton Park Road, Toronto, ON, M1G 3G9
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Our Mission Statement: St. Mark's is called to be a progressive, inclusive, life-affirming Christian faith community in The United Church of Canada that is committed to engaging faith, scripture and tradition in progressive ways, seeking to be inclusive of all regardless of ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, race or sexual orientation and striving to affirm the inherent blessing of life found in all Creation.

Welcome: Whatever the makeup of your family, whatever your background, we are pleased that you are interested in the Sacrament of Baptism and give thanks! At St. Mark's all are invited to share in the waters of life at baptism and the bread of life at communion. All it takes is an openness to sharing in the promise of new life offered by God to us through the stories and life of Jesus.

Baptism is both a celebration of the grace and blessing of God that is always ours and an expression of our faith in and commitment to the ways of Christian faith. Baptism is, at its heart, a sacred and holy act claiming that we belong to God and, as God's, we are inherently, intimately, and profoundly blessed. This blessing, like a spring rain bringing life to the seed buried in the ground, renews our very being. Images of being washed and being made new abound in the church's experience of this sacrament. The Sacrament of Baptism is also a profound commitment to live in the gracious, generous, and just ways that Christ has shown us to be are both God's way and God's will.

To point to the presence of the holy in the world,
the church receives, consecrates, and shares
visible signs of the grace of God.

In company with the churches
of the Reformed and Methodist traditions,
we celebrate two sacraments as gifts of Christ:
baptism and holy communion.

In these sacraments the ordinary things of life
—water, bread, wine—
point beyond themselves to God and God's love,
teaching us to be alert to the sacred in the midst of life.

Before conscious thought or action on our part,
we are born into the brokenness of this world.

Before conscious thought or action on our part,
we are surrounded by God's redeeming love.

Baptism by water in the name of the Holy Trinity
is the means by which we are received, at any age,
into the covenanted community of the church.
It is the ritual that signifies our rebirth in faith
and cleansing by the power of God.

Baptism signifies the nurturing, sustaining,
and transforming power of God's love
and our grateful response to that grace.

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We sing of the Spirit,
who speaks our prayers of deepest longing
and enfolds our concerns and confessions,
transforming us and the world.

We offer worship
as an outpouring of gratitude and awe
and a practice of opening ourselves
to God's still, small voice of comfort,
to God's rushing whirlwind of challenge.

Through word, music, art, and sacrament,
in community and in solitude,
God changes our lives, our relationships,
and our world.

We are baptized into the community of God rather than a specific congregation, but we make our profession of faith with a community gathered to worship. We make a commitment to continue to be there for you and your family. Baptism is not to be taken lightly, by participating in the Sacrament of Baptism, you are naming St. Mark's as your church home. We will work to keep in contact with you so that you may know what is happening here and encourage your participation in and support of the ministry of St. Mark's as possible.

Church is important to us, and being here for worship gives you a chance to become familiar with our congregation and gives us a chance to be part of your life and the life of your child(ren). This congregation is committed to partnering with you in providing a church and a program that will benefit all - your family and our existing community.

The world has changed, it has gotten smaller, families are connected by technology, & our sense of community has expanded its traditional boundaries exponentially. Wherever you call home now, if this is the place where you feel connected with your faith, we celebrate and give thanks for that connection to God and to us.



In our urban setting, or wherever we find ourselves living, hectic life styles and pressures keep us separate from an identification with faith, work and worship. We appreciate your intentional choice to gather at the font to celebrate in the sacrament of baptism.

The first step towards Baptism is for you to make your way to St. Mark's for a service of worship so that we can get to meet each other. At that service, you can speak to the minister and get a Baptism Information Form to submit and bring back. This gives us an opportunity to meet and greet you and your family, and for you to get to meet some of us. Baptism is a wonderful entry point to the St. Mark's community of faith.

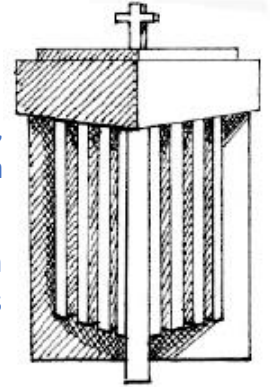
When the Form is returned the minister will visit with you to talk about the baptism. If it feels right for us to share this sacrament together, a date will be set for the Sunday morning service of celebration with the Congregation. Baptism at St. Mark's happens within the mandate of the Worship Ministry Team that engages with the minister, planning and sharing in worship together.

The Service of Baptism

Baptism is celebrated as part of a Sunday service of worship in the presence of family, friends, and the congregation. Candidates are presented and introduced before being asked to make a profession of faith and a statement of commitment.

You (or the parents) are asked if you believe in God, who has created this world; in Jesus, in whom we see life lived fully and honourably; and in the Holy Spirit, the expression of God's presence with us at all times. Your response is "Yes, by God's grace and with God's help!"

Then the congregation is asked to make a commitment as well.



We stand with you offering our support and to share in the celebration of the life we have received from God. We stand to make our commitment to provide this community of caring Christians for you. We commit ourselves to make sure this church is here for you and your child, and there will be a Nursery and a Christian Education program to help teach you and your child stories of the faith. We welcome you today and hope that you will come to be a part of this family of God as you grow in faith.

After we have made our professions and spoken about our commitments, we move to the Baptismal font where waters that have been blessed are poured into the font and used to mark a cross on the forehead in the act of baptism. The Sacrament of Baptism is a sacred and holy act that transforms our being and stirs up in us the fullness of life, as Christ shows us God's will for us in life.

Godparents

At St. Mark's, the role of "Godparent" is essentially fulfilled by the congregation, and, if you wish to recognize individuals who will play a special role in a child's life of faith, they may stand with you.

What's next?

When parents and the congregation live up to their baptismal vows, it is anticipated individuals being baptized will come to the stage in their spiritual life where they wish to profess their own faith. After discussion with the minister and a profession of faith (or "confirmation") in a service of worship, the individuals are accepted into full and formal membership in both the United Church of Canada and the St. Mark's congregation.

We sing of God's good news lived out,
a church with purpose:
faith nurtured and hearts comforted,
gifts shared for the good of all,
resistance to the forces that exploit and
marginalize,
fierce love in the face of violence,
human dignity defended,
members of a community held and inspired by God,
corrected and comforted,
instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ,
creation's mending.
We sing of God's mission.

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