

Clifton Pastoral Charge
Old Barns and Hilden United Churches
Session Information Packet

Baptism?



Or Blessing?



BAPTISM



Baptism is the sole rite of initiation into full membership in the Christian community, the Body of Christ, no matter what the age of the person being baptized.

The baptism service celebrates the graceful initiative of God in calling and claiming us, and the faithful response of the people as individuals and as a community.

Baptism is a Sacrament of the Church, instituted by Christ. By Baptism, we enter the Church, where we are nourished in faith and life.

The Christian scriptures do not specifically say that children were baptised. They do suggest, however, that whole households were baptised together, and we assume children were included (Acts 16: 15; 1 Corinthians 1: 16). The New Testament was written during a time when the Church was spreading rapidly and so, at that time, the Baptism of adults was the most important thing.

In the Baptism of anyone, the personal faith of the one being baptized is important. The water is symbolic of birth into a new kind of life and a new kind of community. The gift of the Holy Spirit which accompanies Baptism gives power to live this new life. The new life is understood as a life of union with Christ and with Christ's people.

New Testament writers speak of that experience in different metaphors; Paul speaks of participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus; John talks of new birth; still others talk of liberation from bondage and of the freedom of a new humanity.

This gift of God in Jesus Christ, celebrated and claimed in Baptism, is the beginning of enduring participation in the journey of God's people toward God's New Creation.

BLESSING



Mark 10: 13-16 ~ "People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."

For families who are not, and do not wish to become, active members of either the Old Barns or Hilden United Church, the Sessions offer a Blessing for their child.

The purpose of a Blessing is to celebrate the birth of a child and confirm God's unconditional love and blessing for this child. While Baptism takes place during worship, Blessings can take place either during worship or in a more private setting.

The Blessing option preserves the integrity of the parents and the sacrament of Baptism, with all its vows and promises connected to membership.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Do I have to be a member of the Old Barns or Hilden United Church to have a child baptized?

Yes, a requirement for having a child baptized is that at least one of the parents must be a member in good standing at the Old Barns United Church.

The United Church of Canada Manual (2019) states:

A person becomes a full member through one of the following ways:

- a) adult baptism and profession of faith;*
- b) confirmation, if the person was baptized as a child and has now reached the age of understanding;*
- c) reaffirmation of Christian faith, if the person has already been baptized and made a profession of faith at an earlier time;*
- d) through a certificate of transfer of membership in good standing from another congregation or church; or*
- e) if the person cannot get a certificate of transfer of membership from another church, they may transfer their membership if the governing body is satisfied that they
 - i) have been baptized;*
 - ii) became full members of their church after they made a profession of Christian faith;*
 - iii) are of good Christian character; and*
 - iv) have valid reasons for transferring to the United Church.**



What does it mean to be a Member “In Good Standing” at the Old Barns or Hilden United Church?

Baptism is about Church Membership. Membership is a core identity and is a journey of discipleship. Like the disciples in the Gospels themselves, none of us are perfect or ideal. We are all at different places of understanding, maturity and commitment.

Regardless of where we find ourselves on our faith journey, a member “in good standing” seeks to:

- Have a basic belief in God or the Divine and that Jesus of Nazareth plays a central role in their faith journey
- Actively seek, as they are able, to deepen their faith through personal and collective study; through prayer and reading scripture; through pursuing answers to questions and obstacles to faith
- Attend Sunday worship as often as they are able and help build up the community of faith
- Discern their talents and gifts and answer their “call”; do their part in the mission and ministry of God, in Christ
- Support the mission and ministry of the church with their time, talents, and treasure as they are able.

Do you have private Baptismal/Blessing services?

Because Baptism is the Sacrament by which a person becomes part of the Christian community, it is to be celebrated at the regular Sunday service, with the congregation present.

Blessings can take place either during worship or in a more private setting.

Is there a fee for having a child Baptized or Blessed?

No. Sometimes families may want to donate to the church on this special occasion.

What if I live away from the Old Barns or Hilden United Church but want to have my child Baptized or Blessed at the church because it is my “Family Church”?

We would be happy to baptize your child on behalf of the congregation where you presently are a member. Blessings can be done for anyone regardless of where they reside.

What about Godparents for Baptisms?

Godparents are welcome. If you have Godparents, we would be happy to incorporate them into the service. In the United Church, we believe that the congregation normally assumes that role.



What should we do now?

Once you have thoroughly read this material, take time to think and talk about your own relationship with the church.

Decide whether you and your child are ready for membership and discipleship in the church. If you are ready to make this commitment, apply for Baptism.

However, if you are not ready for this step at this time, the Blessing of your Child should be what is requested.

If you desire to continue with the Baptism/Blessing, fill out the attached form, sign it, contact the minister to book an appointment by calling 902-895-2914 or emailing phillip.kennedy@cliftonpastoralcharge.ca

SHOULD I CHOOSE BAPTISM OR BLESSING FOR MY CHILD – FAQ?

- ◇ **I want to give thanks to God for my child's birth.**
Blessing your child is a great way to give thanks for their birth. This is done as part of a Baptism or a Blessing.
Baptism is about much more than this, however. It is about membership in the church.
- ◇ **I want my child to go to Sunday School.**
Neither Baptism nor Blessing is a condition for attending Sunday School. No child is ever turned away.
- ◇ **I want to protect my child from going to Hell if they should die.**
In the United Church of Canada, we do NOT believe that God would condemn children to hell because they are not baptized. Baptism is about church membership and choosing to raise your child in the Christian faith
- ◇ **I want my child to be married in this church.**
Whether or not your child eventually wishes to marry as a Christian will be their own decision when the time comes. We do not require baptismal certificates for marriage.
- ◇ **I want to save my child the embarrassment of being baptized when they are older.**
The United Church baptizes people of all ages. Adult baptism is not only the original form of Christian Baptism, it is a profoundly significant experience for those who decide on their own to be members of the church.
- ◇ **I want to give my child a Christian name at the baptism.**
In other faith traditions, this is called a Christening, and is not a part of our United Church.
- ◇ **I want my child baptized because it is a tradition of our family.**
The tradition of baptism without commitment to Christ and the Church is a total misunderstanding of Baptism. Perhaps a Blessing would be a better option for your family.

BAPTISM – VOWS and LITURGY

Statement of Purpose

The Sacrament of Baptism is the one right of initiation into membership in the Christian Church. We are united with Christ, united with one another and the Christian community of every time and place. We are called as disciples of Christ to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit for the work of the church in the world. During this sacrament, we all recommit ourselves to this calling.

Promises of Parents

Will you accept the responsibility of acting and speaking on your child's behalf?
Will you endeavor to show your child the Christian life and to grow with your child in faith?

"I will, God being my helper."

Will you join with 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."

Promises of Godparents *(if needed)*

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

I will, God being my helper.

Profession of Faith

Do you believe in God and in God's unconditional love as revealed in Jesus Christ?

"Yes, I do!"

Will you seek justice and resist evil?

"I will, by the grace of God."

Will you follow Jesus in both your words and deeds?

"Yes, with God being my helper."

Congregational Commitment

By the grace of God, will you, the members of the Old Barns or Hilden United Church, commit to support and nurture *(insert names)*, within a community which worships God, resists evil and seeks justice?

"We will, God being our helper"

Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Pouring of Water

Gracious and Holy God, we bless you for the gift of life, and, within it, the gift of water. Over its unshaped promise your Spirit hovered at creation. By water, comes the growth of the earth. Through water, you led the children of Israel to freedom. In the waters of the Jordan your child Jesus was baptized. Now may your Spirit be upon us and what we do. May this water be a sign of new life in Christ for all, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The Act of Baptism

What is name of your child? (*Insert name*), I baptize you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Marking with the Sign of the Cross with Water

(*Insert name*), with the sign of the cross, you are marked as Christ's forever. Amen.

Blessing

(*Insert name*), may the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you today and always. Amen

Presentation of Symbol (*Old Barns*)

(*Insert name*), receive this book, with stories from our Holy Scriptures, and hear what the Spirit is saying to you and to the church. Amen

Congregational Welcome and Walkabout



BLESSING – LITURGY

Jesus gathered children to him and blessed them.

Mark 10: 13-16 ~ "People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."

Throughout the Bible, children are loved and called by God. Children are a blessing to our present world and represent hope for the future. By bringing children into a broken world, parents live out an extraordinary faith and hope in God. As we bless this child, we remember that God's grace arrives before anything we do, think or imagine. Today we recognize within this community of faith what God has already done because, since their birth, God's love and grace has poured out upon this child.

Presentation of the Child

What is the name of this child?

Laying on of Hands

People are invited to lay their hand on the child as the following blessing is said: (Insert name), you are blessed by God. May God's joy always be in your heart. May God's love surround your living. May you love kindness, seek justice and walk humbly with God. May God's presence strengthen you day and night.

Marking with the Sign of the Cross with Oil

(*Insert name*), with the sign of the cross, you are blessed. Amen.

Prayer

Eternal God, enfold (*insert name*) and his/her family with your grace. May their home be a place of your presence, your peace, your love, your forgiveness and your freedom. Amen

Bible Book (*Old Barns*)

(*Insert name*), receive this book with stories from our Holy Scripture. May it remind you that you are never alone. You are always embraced by God and the Old Barns church community. Amen

APPENDIX A

Baptism, whatever the age of the person being baptized, is the sole rite of initiation into full membership in the Christian community, the Body of Christ. Baptism is a Sacrament of the Church, instituted by Christ. By Baptism we enter the Church, where we are nourished in faith and life.

Old Barns and Hilden United Churches, as faith communities within the United Church of Canada, are under the authority of the policy of the United Church of Canada (UCC).

The UCC Manual (2019) states:

B.3.2.1 Baptism of Children

Children may be baptized

a) with the advance approval of the governing body or a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces; and

b) if one or both of their parents are full members in good standing.

The governing body may make exceptions to these requirements.

B.3.2.2 Emergency Baptism

In an emergency where there is no time to get advance approval of a baptism, the person who baptizes must inform the governing body at its next meeting, and ask the governing body to confirm the decision to baptize.

B.3.3 Full Members of the Congregation

B.3.3.1 Approval

A person becomes a full member of the congregation with the approval of

a) the governing body;

b) the congregation, if the congregation decides to take on this responsibility; or

c) a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces and two full members of the United Church, if the person is under the chaplain's pastoral care.

B.3.3.2 Readiness In order to become a full member, a person must have enough knowledge about the Christian faith and the United Church to make their commitment with understanding.

B.3.3.3 Process

A person becomes a full member through one of the following ways:

a) adult baptism and profession of faith;

b) confirmation, if the person was baptized as a child and has now reached the age of understanding;

c) reaffirmation of Christian faith, if the person has already been baptized and made a profession of faith at an earlier time;

d) through a certificate of transfer of membership in good standing from another congregation or church; or

e) if the person cannot get a certificate of transfer of membership from another church, they may transfer their membership if the governing body is satisfied that they

i) have been baptized;

ii) became full members of their church after they made a profession of Christian faith;

iii) are of good Christian character; and

iv) have valid reasons for transferring to the United Church.

Certificates of Transfer: If a certificate of transfer of membership is presented (see paragraph (d) above) that is more than one year old, the governing body must check that the person is still in good standing with their congregation. If the certificate is more than three years old, the governing body must be satisfied with the person's explanation for the time lapse.

"Full Members" are confirmed members of the Old Barns or Hilden United Church.

"In Good Standing" means that at least one parent currently participates in the life and work of the Old Barns or Hilden United Church.



Blessing

For families who do not meet the requirements for the Baptism of their child, the Clifton Pastoral Charge provides the following options:

- a) in consultation with the ministry team, the parent(s) works to meet the requirements necessary by becoming a confirmed member of the Old Barns or Hilden United Church themselves,
- b) their child receives a Blessing instead of Baptism.

Blessings are an option for families who have no desire to become members of the church at this point. The purpose of a Blessing is to celebrate the birth of a child and confirm God's unconditional love and blessing for this child. While Baptism take place during worship, Blessings can take place either during worship or in a more private setting.

This option preserves the integrity of the parents and the sacrament of Baptism (with all its vows and promises connected to membership).

The Blessing liturgy includes the laying on of hands and prayers as well as making the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child with oil.

In Old Barns, the child is presented with a gift to remember this Blessing and to remind them they are embraced by God and Old Barns. The parents are given information about the Old Barns United Church and are invited to get to know us better.



Baptism and Blessing Policy of the Clifton Pastoral Charge

Adopted by the Sessions of
Old Barns United Church on April 16, 2021 and
Hilden United Church on July 15, 2021

Application for Baptism/Blessing Clifton Pastoral Charge

Old Barns and Hilden United Churches

2603 Highway 236, Old Barns, Nova Scotia, B6L 1K1

phillip.kennedy@cliftonpastoralcharge.ca

902-895-2914

Seeking:	Baptism or Blessing (pick one)	Date of Application:	
ABOUT THE CHILD <i>(please PRINT)</i>			
SURNAME:		ALL GIVEN NAMES:	
BIRTH DATE:		PLACE OF BIRTH:	
GENDER:		PERMISSION TO PRINT NAME IN BULLETIN:	YES OR NO
HOME MAILING ADDRESS:			
ABOUT THE PARENT(S)/GAURDIAN(S) <i>(please PRINT)</i>			
PARENT ONE'S FULL NAME:			
HAS PARENT ONE BEEN BAPTIZED/CONFIRMED	Baptized: Yes or No If so, where:	Confirmed: Yes or No If so, where:	
PARENT ONE'S TELEPHONE #s			
PARENT ONE'S E-MAIL			
PARENT TWO'S FULL NAME:			
HAS PARENT TWO BEEN BAPTIZED/CONFIRMED	Baptized: Yes or No If so, where:	Confirmed: Yes or No If so, where:	
PARENT TWO'S TELEPHONE #s			
PARENT TWO'S E-MAIL			

OTHER MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD <i>(please give ages of other children)</i>	NAME & AGE		RELATIONSHIP	
Why are you seeking Baptism/Blessing for your child?				
If you are seeking baptism, how are you presently involved as “a member in good standing” at Old Barns or Hilden UC?				
If you are seeking Baptism, and your child is not part of the Clifton Pastoral Charge, in which congregation will your child be participating to grow and learn in the faith?	<i>(Name of Congregation and Address)</i>			
Baptism: Except in extraordinary circumstances, we have dates for Baptism. In which month were you hoping to have your child Baptized?		Blessing: Are you requesting a private service in our sanctuary or a public service during a Baptism Sunday? In which month were you hoping to have your child Blessed?	<i>Private or Public</i>	

*We the undersigned have read all of the Baptismal/Blessing material and believe that we meet the requirements for **Baptism** within the Clifton Pastoral Charge (Old Barns or Hilden churches).*

Parent of Child{ren} _____ Parent of Child{ren} _____

*We the undersigned have read all of the Baptismal/Blessing material and would like to discuss further the option of having our child **Blessed** in the Clifton Pastoral Charge (Old Barns or Hilden).*

Parent of Child{ren} _____ Parent of Child{ren} _____