

Preparing for Holy Baptism

St. Barnabas Anglican Church

*Your First Step:
Making a Choice About Baptism*



Baptism

Some Straight Talking

Welcome, and thanks for contacting our Parish about Holy Baptism.

We know that your child's life is extremely important to you and that you want nothing less than the best for your child.

Your child's life is equally important to this church, and we want nothing less than the best for your child.

Because your child is so important to us, we want to be upfront and honest about this important step that you are considering for your child and your family.

We want there to be no misunderstanding about why we believe that this is so important for your child, and allow you to make an informed choice about what is best for you and your family at this time.

So, this booklet has some straight talking in it. We don't intend to offend, but hope and pray an understanding of what it means to be baptised, and how that is lived out, will be the end result of your reading this, and any ongoing conversations that we have.

Reading this information and engaging the questions it poses is the first part of preparing for baptism in our Parish.

A Changing World

Sometime between 1960 and 1980 a very different view of the place of religion in the world started to come about. Some people have grieved this deeply, while others, including many in the Church, have found new freedom and possibilities.

While many now operate in this new way, others still practise their Christian life in the old ways. What this change brought with it is a new sense of what it means to be Christian and, specifically, what it means to be baptised.

How did we change?

In the 1950's and early 1960's many parents did not worry about whether their children would grow up Christian. It just usually happened.

Outside work and school, the Church was "the only show in town". Large Church Youth groups met on Friday nights. On Saturday, you played sports and went to the movies with the same crowd. On Sundays, the town closed down – shops were shut and no one worked. On Sunday mornings, kids went to Sunday schools while parents were in Church.

Church, home and town worked together to give us 'Christian values'. People grew up Christian by simply being raised in a local community.

Most of us expected to be baptised, to have a church wedding, to have a church funeral. Why? Because we lived in this Christian society, where everyone was "Christian".

When did we change?

It's hard to date just when it happened. It was made up of a series of events that came with a rush: TV in every home, Sunday sports, extended hours for pubs, clubs and shops.

Linked with this was an era of full employment and high wages, making possible the second car, family mobility, travel and financial security. We also found secular non-Christian ways of understanding the world.

This new Canadian society no longer acts as a prop for the Church, nor does it need the Church to prop it up. There are no longer any free rides for the Church.

This new world provides as many challenges for the Church as it does for those who we share it with.

A new way of being Christian (or perhaps an old one rediscovered)

This is an opportunity to celebrate! We are at last free to choose to live in a way that makes being a Christian an exciting adventure and a significant choice. It is a choice that each of us gets to make.

Choosing to follow Jesus and live differently in the world around them is what the very first followers of Jesus did. As a result, they lived an adventuresome Church – a community of people seeking to live faithfully together and act differently to make a difference to themselves, and the world about them.

Thus, we are different. We have a different story and view of the world. We have a different set of values. We are Christian.

Making a Choice

In this new situation, the central question for all of us is: which group of people do I want to shape my life and the life of my family? What set of values and principles do I seek to live by?

Baptism is the deliberate way persons (children and adults) are identified as part of God's family and located within a Christian group, a church. A church is a group of people who walk this journey together. *It is impossible to live a Christian life without being a part of a community that seeks to nurture, encourage, sustain and uphold one another in this important choice.*

So, there's no more important choice to be made than this . . . which group of people do I want to shape my life and the life of my family?

Is it to be a Christian group, a church, or not?

So, Is Baptism really what you want?

You see, the new situation we've just described also means a new freedom and a new honesty that allows for people to choose not to be Christian!

Parents ask for baptism for their children for a whole variety of reasons.

Many of those reasons still belong to the 'old situation', which is over, but for some the break has not yet fully occurred.

In the new situation, perhaps Baptism and actively belonging to our Christian community is not what you honestly want for your child or yourself?

Some questions and reasons given for baptism?

Let's take a look at some commonly given reasons for seeking baptism and see if baptism is still the best way to respond to your reasons.

'It's expected of us. It's like turning twenty-one. Everyone goes through these things, don't they?'

Reply: No they don't! There's nothing natural about Baptism any more. It's about being different, not about being the same. If you want a special occasion to welcome your child into your family, throw a party and we would love to help you prepare a special blessing to celebrate.

'Our parents are always on our backs to get the baby done.'

Reply: Grandparents who really care are a precious part of any family. Tell them how their support always helps when you have an important decision to make. Get them to read this booklet so that you might have a conversation together.

'This child's arrival has been a gift to us. We want to say "thanks" to God.'

Reply: All parents know just how thankful you feel. It's a wonderful feeling. In our Church we have a beautiful service of 'Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child' and we'd love to talk about celebrating this with you.

'We were baptised as kids, and as a result never got sick'

Reply: Baptism has nothing to do with health and well-being. It does not have any miraculous properties.

'If my child is not baptised, and they die, will they go to heaven?'

Reply: We believe in a God who is so loving and so compassionate that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God through Jesus Christ. Sadly, in centuries past, and even today, some parts of the Church teach that you need to be baptised to get into heaven. We believe that baptism is a human response, and that it is only God who judges each of us. We do not believe that baptism is a ticket to heaven!

'If my child is not baptised can they still receive the sacraments of the church, including Holy Communion and marriage?'

Reply: The Church offers seven sacraments and you do not need to be baptised to receive most of these, including forgiveness. Baptism is the usual requirement for people to receive Holy Communion. The Church currently requires that at least one partner in a couple seeking marriage is a baptised person.

'Our life in the Christian community is essential to us. It has formed us into the persons we are. It keeps us in touch with the source of our faith, hope, joy and love. We know and share in the lives of others in the community. We want that community to also shape the life of our child.'

Reply: Then let's start to prepare for baptism!

If you are still with us . . .

We've tried to let you know why we take Baptism seriously in this Parish – that it is a choice about a way of living, and not a once-only event.

If you now feel sure that Baptism is what you must do for your child and if you are prepared to do some serious work and preparation to prepare for Baptism, then so are we. Baptism preparation involves participation in the worship life of the congregation and some one-on-one sessions with our ministry team. You can get more details by contacting our Church Office.

If, however, you feel that you are unable to commit at this time, then we thank you for taking the time to read this and support you in this decision. We hope and pray that God's Holy Spirit might continue to lead you to explore belonging to a Christian community and the wondrous way of life that such a choice brings to those who participate.

Conduct of Baptisms

The Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary is the "chief" baptiser in every Anglican Church in this Diocese. The Rector is the Bishop's representative in this place, and so he will act at the 'chief' baptiser in this Parish.

Baptism takes place within the context of our normal Parish worship where the whole body gathers to welcome its newest members. Baptism is not a "private" event, but a public profession.

Baptism is a universal Christian rite – you are not baptized an "Anglican", but as a disciple of Jesus. However, you are baptized into a community of believers, and so our desire is that you would enter into the journey of life with us.

A baptism preparation course is mandatory. We also require that parents and children have already been attending one of our main worship services.

What Now?

If you would like to book in for a Service of Thanksgiving, contact our Parish Office below to make a date.

If you would like to further explore baptism, contact our Parish office to make an appointment with the Rector.

If you would like to discuss any of these steps on the journey, or obtain further information, please contact the Parish Office:

Phone: (403) 526-7713

Email: office@stbmh.ca

Website: www.stbmh.ca



ST. BARNABAS

CHURCH • COMMUNITY
WHERE PEOPLE FLOURISH

OUR MISSION - GLORIFYING GOD AS AGENTS OF HIS RECONCILIATION (II CORINTHIANS 5:19)