**Baptism at St. James United Church**

Your interest in Baptism suggests two things: that you are interested in being baptized as an adult OR that you are blessed with the privilege of sharing your life with a child and wish to nurture spiritual development of this new life. We congratulate you and offer to support you in this significant beginning of you or your child’s spiritual growth. Here, we will focus on infant/child baptisms. Should you wish to have an adult baptism ceremony, please call St. James church at 705-436-5225.

It is important that you to understand before going any further that the decision to baptize your infant is yours to make. The congregation of St. James has already decided that they want to welcome your child. Children have a very special place in the life of our church family and we take great delight in every opportunity to receive a child by Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. However, as much as we want to welcome your child, this is a decision which only you can make. You have to decide if you are ready to accept your responsibility as Christian parents or sponsors.

As with other churches, we have our own policies that are based in the fundamental belief that Baptism is the rite of initiation in the Christian community. Consequently, it is impossible to separate the sacrament from your own relationship with the church. Below is some information that will help you understand the meaning of Baptism so that you can then decide whether you are ready to make this decision for the sake of your child. We hope that you will choose to say YES, but we cannot take away your responsibility to decide

Whatever your decision, the family of St. James United Church pray that God will always bless you and your child with an abundance of His love, grace and happiness.

**What is Baptism?**

Luke 18:15-17 says. “Some people brought their children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them. The disciples saw them and scolded them for doing so, but Jesus called the children to Him and said, **“Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Remember this! Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”**
According to everything that Christians believe, your child was created by God and is already loved by God, no matter what you decide about his/her Baptism. Baptism is not a magical incantation which makes God love your child.

Since God loves your child and wants only the best for him/her, it is God’s will that your child inherit eternal life. His/her salvation has already been accomplished by God in the saving act of Jesus Christ on the cross. Baptism is a sign of what God has already done and a reminder that salvation is a gift offered to all. Eventually, all of us decide for ourselves whether to accept the gift of salvation. That’s a decision which your child will someday make for him/herself through Confirmation. For now, Baptism is a celebration of what is really true, no matter what you do: God knows your child. God loves your child. God has already saved your child.

Baptism is also an acknowledgement that, no matter how much God loves our children, we control how much they experience the benefits of that love. Our children are entrusted, by God and our society, to the care of our parents. There may be lots of good food for our children, but we decide what they eat. There may be lots of good books available to them, but we decided what they read. This control diminishes as they grow older, but we cannot deny the responsibility which belongs to all of us who are parents.

In Baptism, we acknowledge that our responsibility includes the spiritual nurture and development of our children. They will learn about God only if we share our faith with them through family devotions and by taking them to Church and Sunday School. No matter how much God loves them, we decide how much they will benefit from the Love of God.

Therefore, Baptism is first and foremost an opportunity for Christian parents to make certain promises which are vital to the spiritual well-being of our children (see *Parents Obligation* below).

Baptism is a partnership of God and parents working together for the sake of the child. There is also another partner – the congregation (se *St. James Obligation* below). For us, the community is the local church. Accordingly, the Service of Baptism provides for promises to be made by both parents and the congregation. While the parents promise to provide a Christian home where the child will experience the love of God on a daily basis through their care and the example of their faith, the congregation promises to provide a community in which the child is safe and where he/she will experience the love of God through the leadership and example of every church member.

As parents and as members of the congregation, we may not always keep these promises, but they are nevertheless made with solemn intention because we know that the spiritual health and happiness of our children depends on us! And for their sake, we must be willing to work together, to support each other, and to hold each other accountable for the promises which we have made.

**St. James United Church & the United Church of Canada**

St. James United Church supports the baptism policy outlined in the United Church of Canada Manual. In a busy world, it is difficult to keep centered in the church. St. James honours the parent's intention to be part of the church family to the best of their ability. However, our hope is that at least one parent of the child be a member of good standing in the church. "In good standing" implies regular attendance, communion, fellowship in the church, and financial support of the church. The parents should have a sincere interest in raising their child in the Christian faith by bringing them to worship, giving them opportunity to learn through Sunday School, and being an active part of the community of faith. This commitment can be discussed with the minister. Baptism is not a requirement for God's love. We believe people who live or die without baptism are in no way condemned, lost, or damned.

**Parent’s Obligation**

Do you affirm your faith in God, your desire to follow the ways of Jesus Christ, and your willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit?

Will you do your best to raise your child in the community of the church, here, and at home teaching them the truths and the duties of the faith so that together you might grow in your faith?

Although you will find your own ways to keep these promises, we can agree that they require a willingness to make God a part of your home, to provide an environment which is truly safe, and to be a family that is part of the church family.

**St. James’ Obligation**

You may choose to establish a special relationship with a person/s who will have particular responsibility for your child. If so, you are encouraged to have them stand with you during the Service (Godparents). However, in The United Church of Canada, every member of the congregation becomes your child’s God-Parent.

We promise to support each baptized child with constant love, wholesome example, Christian teaching and faithful prayer. Because of this commitment from the congregation, it is important for the people to be familiar with your child before they are baptized. **Therefore, parents are required to attend at least 3 Sunday Services before their child is baptized** so that the church family is able to profess their love and support to a child with who they have developed a relationship with. It goes without saying that we encourage church participation following the Sacrament Sunday whenever possible.

**How do I go about arranging a baptism?**

If you're interested in a baptismal ceremony at St. James United Church, you will need to call the church and arrange for a meeting with our minister, Patricia James. She will review the significance of baptism for your child/ren (or for you). Through baptism, a person is welcomed into the Christian faith and develops a relationship with a faith Community. Baptism can hold tremendous significance for the parent as well as the child. If you are new to St. James, we hope that you will find this to be a time filled with potential for you to discover a relationship with us. We are a warm and welcoming church!

Once it has been determined that you wish for your child to be baptised at St. James, a date will be set for the sacrament. Typically, we ask that you attend church with your child a minimum of 3 times prior to the baptism so that the congregation develops a connection with your child. This is important as the congregation promises to help support your child in the Christian faith.

**Is there a charge for the baptismal ceremony?**

No. There is no cost for the baptismal ceremony.

**What should I expect during the baptism ceremony?**

Baptisms take place during our regular Sunday 10 a.m. service, witnessed by our full congregation. This is important, because during the ceremony, the congregation makes a promise to the person being baptised to support that person in his or her spiritual growth. The ceremony takes about 5-7 minutes, and includes:

•Welcoming to the front of the church during a worship service

•Pouring and blessing of the water

•Asking three questions about your faith and promises

•Anointing with water

•Prayer for the newly baptized

•Presentation of the newly baptized to the Congregation

 NOTE: The person being baptized will receive a Baptismal Certificate to mark the celebration and it will be
 recorded in our Baptismal Registry.

**May I invite my family and friends to the baptism?**

You can invite as many people as you like to the celebration of baptism. Our sanctuary is welcoming to everyone.

**Do we have a space for a reception following the baptism?**

Yes. We have space that is available for your reception, with full kitchen facilities as well as tables and chairs. There is a small financial cost for this option.