



*Enquiries for the Baptism
of Infants and Younger Children*

St. Thomas' Anglican Church

4 Mary Street Bracebridge, ON P1L 2B6

Church office: 645-3486

Email: saint.thomas@bellnet.ca

Website: www.stthomasanglicanchurch.ca

Holy Baptism - A Family Affair

Symbolically, Baptism is like a door – a special door that takes you into a family home. The family is our Christian family, God’s family, the Church. Baptism is the entrance rite into this family. But the door is big and your child cannot come alone – she must be lifted up and helped by others. Those others are the parents and sponsors especially, but also the whole Church family.

Baptism is one of the two “sacraments of the Gospel”. Holy Eucharist is the other one. These are special tokens of God’s love that Jesus himself gave to us through his own participation. When we participate in Holy Baptism, we are carrying out Jesus’ will. *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* ~ Matthew 28:19

Your responsibility as parents is not just to take your child to and through the door, but also to accompany him through the many years that lie ahead as a member of the church. Your child’s baptism is therefore a “family affair”. You as a family promise to trust in God and commit yourself to God’s Church. A promise to God is a thing that should not be taken lightly. You as a family come together through this special door into the Christian household – welcome in!

The church promises to give our best here to help and support you all the way. However, when parents do not follow through on their promises to foster a child’s Christian growth, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for the congregation to uphold the promise they made before God at the child’s baptism.



Support From the Parish Family

Sponsors – The Church's new name for “godparents” these are 2 or 3 persons chosen by the parents to support them in the spiritual growth of their child. Sponsors should be adults who have a deep caring for the child and who are active members of the Christian Church themselves. It is the duty of sponsors to share in the promises made by the parents on behalf of the child.

Sunday Worship – through sacrament, prayer and preaching, God's people are brought together and are renewed in the reality that humankind does not live by things alone, but by the energy and love of God.

Sunday School Program – during Sunday School classes your child will have the opportunity to learn at her own level what it means to be a child of God and a member of the Christian family.

Clergy – as “priest and counselor”, never forget that your parish clergy are available and willing to help you personally or a as a family!



What Happens in Baptism?

The water in baptism is an outward and visible sign of the initiation into the Christian family and the life which comes to us through Christ. It is the initiation into a life-style for those who “intend to lead the new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in God’s holy ways.” It is a life where others come first, a life of service, a life where God is taken seriously!

It starts with a birthday celebration. It is a celebration in that God’s family celebrates the adoption of a new child into the Church.

The birthday gifts:

A new identity – God wants your child to be a “somebody” – a person with an identity and a name; and so, in baptism God claims her as **God’s child**. Since it is impossible for your child to understand this gift right now, there are careful instructions written on the wrapping: “to be wrapped and assembled by my parents/guardians/sponsors over the next several years!” God wants your child to come to know God, but this cannot happen by itself. So much depends on a willingness to “unwrap” the gift and share it with your child. This gift belongs to your child ... will you unwrap it for her?

A new “family” – God’s second gift for your child is the gift of “belonging” to a new family./ One of our very basic human needs is the need to “belong”. But this gift too, is wrapped and can be experienced by the child only when others ensure that she takes part in family activities (ie. family worship and Sunday School). It is the responsibility of the parish family to welcome and accept your child and give her a sense of belonging.

A new “future” – God wants your child to have a life that goes somewhere! God has a plan for your child’s life – a plan of purpose, meaning, faith and hope. God wants this for your son or daughter, but God must have the co-operation of parents, your priest, and the members of your church to make it happen.

Planning the Celebration

Who comes? Naturally we invite the family! And this means not only the sponsors and close relatives, but also the whole congregation, the Christian family into which your child comes as a new member. There may or may not be other candidates for baptism on the same Sunday as your child's.

When? We celebrate the birthday at a special time when the "family" can come "within a celebration of the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday, ideally on major feast days such as The Epiphany, The Baptism of the Lord, The Great Vigil of Easter, All Saints' Day."

How? Through water and the blessing of the priest, your child is received into the family of God.

"When the party's over ..." Just as a marriage is more than a wedding, so is the spiritual life of your child more than his baptism. Baptism is the beginning of a life of growing up in Christ. Just as your child develops through the different physical stages of creeping, crawling, walking and running, so her spiritual development moves through the early years, stimulated by those closest to her: parents, home, family and the whole community!



Growing Together in Christ

Family times for growing:

Mealttime – around the family table, a time to say “thank you” to God

Bedtime – a quiet time for parents to take time with each child and to guide him in ways to talk with God.

Church Holidays - such times as Easter, Christmas, Good Friday and Thanksgiving are opportunities for a family to share in the deeper religious meaning of the event.

“Anytime” occasions – a spring or summer weekend is an opportunity to walk in God’s great outdoors and speak to your children of the gracious God who made our world. A child will often ask questions about God when they occur to her, which may be when you are the busiest. Try not to put her off!

Be honest with your child and don’t be afraid to admit you don’t know or that you share the same question, ie. “Who made God?”, “Where is heaven?”, etc. Place the Baptismal Certificate on the wall of your child’s room and as he grows up take the opportunity to say – “that says God loves you and always will.”



Preparing for the Big Day

Reading this introduction to baptism is a good first step in getting ready for your child's baptism, but there are a few more steps to take.

The priest will ask to meet with you for 2-4 sessions to further discuss the meaning of baptism, answer your questions, and to help you become familiar and comfortable with the ceremony itself.

Ideally, both the parents and the sponsors should attend all these sessions. If the sponsors live out of town, they will still need to read this document and meet with the priest once (even if the day before) to ensure they are prepared for the promises they will make.

May God bless you and your precious little one as you discover His great love. We're overjoyed to welcome your family into ours!

