

# Baptism at Gower Street United Church

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Do we have to take a class?*

No, there are no classes. However, we do hope that you are either active in the congregation or are willing to come to church a couple of times before the baptism. This will start to get you familiar with us, and us with you. Baptism is a rite of welcome and initiation into a community. It is about belonging... what better way to belong, than to participate.

We do ask that you meet with one of the ministers to prepare for the service. This conversation usually takes about an hour. It is a chance for us to get to know you, and for you to ask any questions you may have.

### *Is it a problem if we aren't 'church people'?*

Not at all. We hope that you are seeking baptism because you believe in God, and want to know God's love. If you are requesting baptism for your child, you will be acting on her or his behalf and speaking for your child, but the sacrament is bestowed on the child. Jesus welcomed everyone - so do we.

### *What if we live out of town?*

We often have people 'coming home' for a baptism in the church where they grew up. Welcome back! If you have chosen Gower for some other reason, we will want to talk with you about finding a home church, and connecting with a community close to where you live when you get back home after the baptism.

### *What age does one get baptized?*

There are no age restrictions at all. Infants are represented by the parents making promises on their behalf during the service. Anyone old enough to understand the questions can answer for themselves. Adults may wish to participate in our faith formation program, called *Making Disciples*, which takes place each winter, but this is not necessary.

### *Can we pick the date?*

As a general rule we do baptisms on the last Sunday of the month. However, if you need another date (for family or travel reasons) we are willing to be flexible. We do not do private or mid-week baptisms, as this is a sacrament of welcome into the whole community.

### *When should we arrive on the day?*

We recommend that you arrive 30 minutes prior to the service, which starts at 11am. You will need to find parking (check the website for the parking map), get coats and boots off, unpack infants, settle small children, find the Nursery, check out the Sunday School for older kids, find the washrooms AND meet with the congregational representative.

*Where do we meet the congregational representative?*

The congregational representative takes part in the service, demonstrating our welcome and support for you. It is usually the Chair of the Worship and Sacraments Committee, however, this person may ask a designate to act in their place. She or he will expect to meet with you in the Tait Osmond room at 10:45am. They will greet you, answer any last questions you may have, and escort you to your seats.

*Can we have god-parents?*

In the United Church tradition, a member of the congregation welcomes you at your baptism, in our case this is the congregational representative. However, if you wish to have god-parents stand with you they are most welcome. They can take part in the laying-on of hands.

*What can we expect Sunday morning?*

The baptism service is included in this booklet - you will go over this with the minister at your interview. The baptism takes place early in the church service, after the welcome and the opening hymn (10 minutes). You will be invited to come and stand at the front with the minister and the congregational representative. If you have children who wish to stand with you they are welcome, as are god-parents. Just at the end of the baptism you will be given a baptism certificate and a baptism candle (and box).

*What if the baby cries during church?*

Our congregation loves children, and understands their needs. If your baby cries during the baptism, it will be taken in stride. If your child is fussy during the service, please take a little time to try to settle her/him, but then feel free to walk quietly out to the Nursery or lobby, as needed. All of us sympathize with your child and want her or him to be comfortable and happy.

*What about our other child?*

If you have a small child who will be joining you for the baptism, the minister will provide you with a colouring book which will help you have a conversation about baptism and what it means. Your other child/ren may stand with you at the time of baptism.

Children are free to stay in church with their parents, but many enjoy going out after the baptism to join our Sunday School. If you arrive early, you can find the room your child would go to, and perhaps meet the teacher. Sunday School lasts as long as church. In the summer we offer Junior Congregation.

*How long will this take?*

After you have made initial contact with us, it usually takes a month or so to arrange to meet the minister, and for you to have time to attend services, if you have not already been doing so.

The service usually takes an hour, although it may run to 75 minutes. Coffee hour

follows church for another 30 minutes or so, and you are all invited to join us if you are able to stay.

*Can we take pictures?*

Photos are a precious keepsake, but they are a disturbance during a service of worship. We ask that you inform your family that photos are best taken after worship is over. Once the minister has shaken hands at the door, she will join you if you want to have a photo with her in it. Videos are welcome, as long as there is no lighting involved, and no moving around.

*How much does this cost?*

There is no fee or cost to any of this. It is a gift of this congregation, and our privilege to welcome you as Jesus would have us do.

If you wish to support the ministry of this congregation your donation is welcome. We do pass plates for offerings during the service, and guest envelopes are available in the lobby as you come in. If you wish to designate a gift to a special cause (Operating account, Organ Fund, Food Bank, etc) you can mark this on the envelope. Any cash which is donated is directed to our Operating account - which helps us pay the bills, and keep our doors open. You are not obliged to make a donation, and may simply pass the plate when it comes to you if you wish.