

Proposal 1

Title: Ritual of Child Blessing: Expanding Rituals of Introduction of Children into Congregations

Originating Body: Official Board of St. John's United Church, Halifax, NS

Intended Court(s) for Action: General Council

Financial Implications: Costs for educational and liturgical resources to be developed

Staffing Implications: Staff time for development and distribution of educational and liturgical resources

Source of Funding if known:

Courts (as applicable) Receiving Proposal and Action Taken by:

Congregation/Pastoral Charge: St. John's United Church

Date:

Concurrence (Agree with Proposal)

Non-Concurrence (Disagree with Proposal)

Comments:

Presbytery/Synod: Halifax Presbytery

Date: May 13, 2014

Concurrence (Agree with Proposal)

Non-Concurrence (Disagree with Proposal)

Comments:

The Halifax Presbytery purposes that Maritime Conference (2014) forward with concurrence the following Proposal:

(a) the 42nd General Council (2015) affirm a ritual distinct from the sacrament of baptism for introduction of children to congregations, a ritual blessing of a child and

(b) assure the preparation of educational and liturgical resources to support this ritual.

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE: We acknowledge children as the gifts of a gracious God. By bringing children into a broken world we live out an extraordinary faith and hope in God. God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, welcomed the children and urged his followers to be like them, full of life and joy. As Canadian society changes from the long held assumption of being a Christian nation to embrace a multi-faith society, the United Church also has adherents from other faiths or non-theists. Some adherents of the United Church, while they experience the blessing of the birth of a child, feel they cannot, with integrity, say the baptismal vows. Yet they still seek a way to acknowledge the riches of parenting within a Christian community, and a ritual expression of the grace that their children embody. A ritual of blessing acknowledges these things, but neither claims nor displaces the special significance of the sacrament of baptism. A liturgy of the blessing of a child would best be placed within an action that acknowledges, in addition, the

blessing of all children within the congregation. This action merely acknowledges symbolically what has happened and is already known – when children arrive in our midst they are a blessing of God. (Example of liturgy attached).

WHEREAS faithful parents in congregational worship at United Churches seek ritual expression of their sense of the blessedness of their children, and that their children have been welcomed into the community

WHEREAS these adherents take the vows of baptism seriously and cannot, with integrity, claim the vows of baptism

WHEREAS these adherents seek to raise their children within and with the support of a Christian community

WHEREAS it is good for the well being of the entire community to be reminded of the blessedness of all its children

WHEREAS it is good for the entire church to engage in discussion about the welcoming of children into Christian community

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- (a) the 42nd General Council (2015) affirm a ritual distinct from the sacrament of baptism for introduction of children to congregations, a ritual blessing of a child and
- (b) assure the preparation of educational and liturgical resources to support this ritual.