What Makes us Baptist?

Canadian Baptists of Western Canada
Who We Are

What makes a Canadian Baptist?

Baptists in Canada have been worshipping together and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ for centuries. Baptists have played key roles in founding initiatives as diverse as Acadia and McMaster Universities and Brandon College, churches started by freed slaves in Nova Scotia, the Mustard Seed Food Bank, and Toronto's Young Street Mission. Notable Canadians such as health care founder Tommy Douglas and Prime Minister John Diefenbaker were Baptists.

But behind our social action, witness, and affinity to each other, a core framework of beliefs guide the Baptist narrative; you can read these values in the following pages.

Baptist Beliefs

Priesthood of All Believers

Loved by God, and made in His image, each of us has the opportunity to meet directly and personally with God. As we are all equal before Him, we have the right and responsibility to participate in Christ’s body, the Church, and to minister to each other as a ‘priesthood of all believers’. We have ordained ministers who perform those functions, such as marriages, that are reserved for licensed clergy by law or tradition.

Ordinances

We believe there are two ordinances, sometimes called sacraments: baptism and communion. Fulfilling these is an act of obedience but they are not a means to salvation.

- **Baptism** – We each come to faith in God through a free, personal decision; therefore, we practice the baptism of believers. For this reason, we do not practice infant baptism, reserving baptism for adults and young people mature enough to make a fully conscious and committed decision. Following Biblical example and modeling the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we baptize by full immersion.

- **Communion** – On a regular basis (weekly to monthly) we remember the saving death and resurrection of Jesus by participating in the sacrament of communion, sharing in Christ’s body and blood through bread and wine.
Congregational Governance
We follow a congregational form of government in which believers come together as a priesthood of believers under the Lordship of Christ, the authority of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to determine God’s will for us. We avoid the top-down hierarchy often associated with other denominations. Locally autonomous churches make their own decisions but participate in the larger body of Christ by associating with the denomination and its shared ministries and by entering into annual covenantal agreements with the denomination.

Separation of Church and State
The church and the civil government have distinct, separate roles that should not infringe on each other. Where they have shared interests and values, they recognize and reinforce each other.

Ordination of Women
We have been ordaining women for leadership in church ministry since 1959.

Marriage
We affirm that the biblical pattern of marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

Sexual Behavior
Any sexual behaviour outside of monogamous heterosexual marriage is not affirmed biblically or historically.

The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada together affirm wholeheartedly the revelation of God as given in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and confess the faith set forth here. We here explicitly assert the doctrines which we regard as crucial to the understanding and proclamation of the Gospel and to practical Christian living:

1. The sovereignty, love, and grace of God, the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit in creation, providence, revelation, redemption and final judgment.
2. The divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and its entire trustworthiness and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
3. The value of each human being as created by God. The universal sinfulness of human-kind since the fall, which alienates all from God and subjects all to condemnation.
4. The full deity and humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, whose substitutionary sacrifice is the sole ground of redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin.
5. The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone in Christ crucified and risen from the dead.
6. The illuminating, regenerating, indwelling and sanctifying work of God, the Holy Spirit, in the believer.
7. The church as set forth in the New Testament and understood historically by the Baptist community.
8. The expectation of the personal, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ, our participation in the resurrection, and the hope of eternal life.
Cultivating Leadership. Investing in Relationship. Engaging in Mission