

Archives

Policy on Amendments to Baptismal Records and Issuance of Amended Baptismal Certificates



Scope

This policy addresses requests for amendments to baptismal records and issuance of amended certificates.

Introduction

Through the sacrament of baptism, a person is made new in Christ and becomes a member of the Church, the family of God. Candidates for baptism and their sponsors make several promises that demonstrate a life-long commitment to Christ and the Church.

Certificate of Baptism

A certificate of baptism is an official record of the church which serves as documentary evidence of the baptized person's membership in the Church, through the sacrament of baptism.

A certified true copy of this record may be requested, by the baptized person (or their legal guardian or parent, in the case of a minor) for school registration, proof of age or proof of identity.

When a copy is prepared, the information contained in the parish's record of baptism will be used as the sole source of information. Therefore, it is imperative that the information appearing in the parish's records be correct and complete. Clergy are expected to make every effort to ensure that information provided at the time of baptism by the parents and sponsors is correct and complete, and that names are recorded in full with correct spelling.

Requests for amendment

From time to time, the parish priest, or the Archivist for the Diocese, is asked to make a change to the information in a baptism record and to issue an amended certificate.

These requests occur very infrequently. Only the following persons have the authority to request an amendment:

- The person baptized, if the person has reached the age of majority, unless the person is under the care of a guardian of property, in which case the guardian of the property
- The parents or, if the parents are no longer alive, the person having custody of the child, if that person is a minor at the time of the request.

Responding to such requests requires careful consideration.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Toronto that changes may be made only under the following conditions:

- i) there is clear and unambiguous evidence that an error resulted in the recording of the information, or
- ii) the name of the person baptized is changed under the law, other than in marriage (recognized by the government), or
- iii) a change is sought to the gender designation on the baptismal certificate.

If one of these conditions is met and the request has been made by a person authorized to make the request, the following steps shall be taken:

- i) The priest who performed the baptism shall be consulted regarding the request. The current incumbent of the parish will also be advised.
- ii) Both priests shall indicate, in writing to the Diocesan Archivist, whether they are aware of any circumstances or related facts which would have a bearing on the request.
- iii) The written request and supporting documentation shall be forwarded to the Diocesan Archivist who will make a recommendation to the Secretary of Synod as to whether the records should be amended and an amended certificate issued.
- iv) The Secretary of Synod shall obtain the Bishop's consent before approving or denying the recommendation.

All written documentation shall be retained in the Archives.

Further Clarification and Guidance

- It is not appropriate to amend original baptism records simply because a relationship amongst those named in the record, and on the certificate, has changed. For example, if the parents of the baptized are no longer in touch with the sponsors/godparents, or, for whatever reason, regret having asked the individuals to fulfill that role, it is not sufficient reason to change the original baptism record.
- When there is a request to correct how a name is spelled, the request should be accompanied by a certified copy of a passport, birth certificate or similar document. If the request is being made on behalf of another (eg. Sponsor; or parent, where the baptized person is of major age), the person whose name is being corrected should provide an affidavit attesting to the error and its need for correction.
- The amended certificate will only be prepared when all of the above requirements are met. The certificate will be identified as an amended certificate and certified by the Secretary of Synod.
- The original baptismal record will always be retained with a notation regarding the amendment and the date of the amendment. All evidentiary documents will be filed and cross referenced as appropriate.
- A copy of the amended certificate will be retained in Archives.

Policy Regarding Requests for Removal of Record from Register

On occasion, the Archivist receives requests from people asking to have their baptismal records removed from the register for the purposes of disassociating themselves from the Anglican Church. These requests are always to be denied.

The baptismal record is an artifact – a record of an actual event which took place and its associated facts. Passage of time and subsequent events do not re-write history.

The Archivist will, instead, insert a notation into the register at the place of the baptismal record, noting the request for no further contact or connection. Only those authorized to request an amendment (noted above) can request such a notation be placed in the records.

The Bishop will be notified by the Archivist of these requests on a timely basis.