



BLESSING OF CHILDREN IN COMMUNITY OF CHRIST (WENDY BALLARD)

The blessing of children is a sacrament in Community of Christ, where we follow the example of Jesus, who took the children in his arms and blessed them. The scriptures (Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17), tell of a time when people were bringing their children to Jesus so he might touch them, and his friends (disciples) who were there, thought he was way too busy for this, and so tried to shoo the children away. Jesus saw this and said, "let the little children come to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven", and he took the children in his arms and he blessed them.

It is, in many ways, the most simple of acts and yet also so sacred. How can something so simple, be so sacred? I think it's because of the spirit of the occasion when the child is there, with their caregivers, accompanied by family, friends, and community and most wonderfully, the Good Spirit is there to bless.

Community of Christ believes children are born pure, and ready to learn and respond to love. There are those reading this article who know exactly what the blessing of children is because you have heard, witnessed and participated in the sacrament. Likely, you brought your children forward for blessing and perhaps you too, were blessed as a child, and so you are very familiar with this experience. Others reading this, may have been to a christening, an infant baptism, perhaps a baby dedication or even these days, a naming day. It seems since time began people have been bringing their children before the religious authorities and their family, friends and community, to seek God's blessing.

The African proverb, that says "It takes a village to raise a child", is very true and so in the blessing

service we acknowledge this, and also challenge the gathering, reminding them that we all have a responsibility to the children, to teach them, learn from them, to set a good example in what we do and say and to pray they come to know the friend they have in Jesus.

This beautiful sacrament is open to church members and friends of the church alike. Children from newborns through age seven may be blessed. And so this sacrament of blessing is where all gathered, represent the child's community, acknowledging God's beautiful loving concern for the child, and the family, also the potential of this little one, as well as our dependence on God as we come asking, seeking and knocking that the Good Spirit will bless, guide and sustain.

It's one of those holy experiences, because what is done is sacred indeed.



