

Baptism, the 2nd Ordinance/Sacrament

Foundation

"In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, the United Church of Christ recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion."

—From the Preamble to the Constitution of the United Church of Christ

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...." --Acts 2:38

"For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus have clothed yourself with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." —Galatians 3:26-28

What does Baptism signify?

The sacrament of baptism is an outward and visible sign of the grace of God. Through baptism a person is joined with the universal church, the body of Christ. In baptism, God works in us the power of forgiveness, the renewal of the spirit, and the knowledge of the call to be God's people always.

How does Baptism take place?

Baptism with water and the Holy Spirit is the sign and seal of our common discipleship. Since baptism is God's gift, the Holy Spirit is called to be upon the water and those being baptized. The act of baptism also marks the beginning of new life of discipleship with Christ, the human response to that gift.

Why is water used?

Water is an essential element of baptism. Water is a prominent symbol of cleansing and life in the Bible—the water of creation, the great flood, the liberation of Israel through the sea, the water of Mary's womb, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, the woman at the well, and Jesus' washing of the feet of the disciples. That is why water is visibly present in the service. In the United Church of Christ, the mode of baptism is a matter of choice. Some traditions use sprinkling, some pouring, and some immersion.

Who is baptized in the UCC?

For infants and children, as well as for youth and adults who have never been baptized before, baptism marks their acceptance into the care of Christ's church, the sign and seal of God's grace and forgiveness, and the beginning of their Christian faith and life. *At GUCC, we defer baptism till an age when the child is old enough to make that decision; preferably right before, concurrently or after Confirmation Class.*

Is there a special time for Baptism?

Baptism is a personal celebration in the lives of the individual candidates and their families. It is also a celebration within the local church family and recognition of its commitment to the candidate. For this reason, baptism is celebrated in the presence of the community gathered for worship. If circumstances require baptism to take place outside of corporate worship, members of the local church, if possible, may participate in the

ceremony with the pastor. In urgent circumstances, such as imminent death, any Christian may perform the baptism.

When should a person be baptized?

Baptism may take place at any worship service where the community is gathered. In the early Christian church, the season of Lent was used as the final period for the preparation of candidates. In the scriptures that are read during the seasons from Advent up to Easter, there are many texts that teach the faith and point toward baptism. In the early church, the candidates were baptized together at the Vigil of Easter (the pre-dawn Easter service). Some local churches still perform baptisms at this service, or on Pentecost Sunday, and also baptize throughout the year.