

# Baptism at First Church

*We offer this information to help you understand the practice of baptism at our Congregational church: First Church, West Hartford as well as the broader Christian perspective and tradition to which we proudly belong.*

## BAPTISM IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

**Baptism is an ancient practice.** The long stretch of history tells us that Christians have celebrated baptism in every land over the past 2,000 years.

**Baptism is a sacrament.** In fact, it is one of two sacraments celebrated in the United Church of Christ (UCC) – the other one being the Lord's Supper or Communion. A sacrament is a tangible way in which God is present.

**Baptism is a means of grace.** For every life there come moments when the miracle of God's grace becomes real in personal ways. There is a felt sense that God is near and that the moment bears a special blessing. Baptism is a moment when the gift of life, the power of love, and the convictions of faith are all held together before God.

**Baptism is a promise.** In the words and water of baptism, a promise is made to teach and live the Christian Faith. That promise is extended in three directions: by parents on behalf of a child or by an individual for himself or herself, by the congregation in promising the sustaining ministry and presence of the church.

**Baptism is a birth.** As the waters of baptism touch their head, they are invited into the spiritual birth of a relationship with God.

**Baptism is a sacred obligation.** As you present your child for baptism, you are promising to invest a special love in their life, a love experienced by raising them in the Christian Faith. This is an awesome task and one that can be fully realized only by taking your own faith as parents seriously. The church stands ready to support you in that task, and to encourage your growth as you tend to the growth of your child.

**Baptism is an act of worship.** In our tradition baptism occurs in the context of worship on a Sunday morning, which gives substance to the promises made to provide a place, the church, for growth in Christian Faith to occur.



## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

The first thing to do is to make an appointment to meet with one of our pastors. Call 860-233-9605. During that appointment the pastor will get to know you and your particular desire for baptism.



*The Rev. Jane Willan,  
Senior Pastor*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Godparents:** While having Godparents is not a common practice in the UCC, we at First Church welcome this if a family should desire the special relationship of Godparents for their children.

**Gratuity/Fee:** There is no fee or gratuity expected. If, however, an individual wishes to make a contribution to the church, checks may be made out to First Church, West Hartford.

**Confirmation:** It is helpful to remember the important relationship between baptism and confirmation in the UCC. Most often, baptism occurs in infancy or early childhood as parents and the church make promises on behalf of a child yet too young to speak for himself or herself. The corollary to this is confirmation, usually as a child enters their teen years. At this time the child, now grown and coming of age, is asked to confirm the promises once made on his or her behalf. A confirmation class taught by the pastors precedes the rite of confirmation. To put these two acts in a visual image, baptism and confirmation are like two bookends in the process of Christian initiation.

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