

This Is A Special Time!

Congratulations!
You are considering a most significant decision - having your child baptized. St. John's United Church of Christ welcomes the



opportunity to share this special time with you and your child. This pamphlet will inform you about the meaning and effect of baptism, and deepen your understanding of the promises you and our congregation make to God and to one another other during the ritual itself.

This Is a Meaningful Time

The United Church of Christ celebrates baptism as a sacrament – an event through which God gives his grace to us. Christian baptism is derived from Jesus' teaching. Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matthew 28:18-20) "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16) Jesus himself made a decision to be baptized (Mark 1:9-11) as an act identifying himself with humanity and confirming his relationship with God as his Father.

God is at work in our lives through baptism. The Bible teaches us that through baptism:

- God works the power of forgiveness in us (Acts 2:38)
- God gives us his Holy Spirit to renew us (Acts 2:38)
- God identifies us with Christ in his death and resurrection, giving us new life (Romans 6:4)
- God unites us with all other Christian people, making us one Body, the Church (Galatians 3:26-28)

Our participation in baptism says, "Yes, God, I accept what you are doing in my life." When an infant or young child is baptized, parents and sponsors are making this acceptance on behalf of the child.

This Is a Celebration Time

The United Church of Christ conducts baptisms public worship services. That is the time we gather as God's people to celebrate God's activity in our lives. Baptism bears witness to that activity. And because the rite is a covenant-making between you and the members of the congregation, the congregation needs to be present. The congregation wants to celebrate with you! Private baptism are performed at St. John's United Church of Christ only on an emergency basis.

Specifically you will be asked the following questions at the time you are baptized:

- Do you desire to have your child baptized into the faith and family of Jesus Christ?
- Will you encourage your child to renounce the powers of evil and to receive the freedom of new life in Christ?
- Will you teach your child to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?
- Do you promise that you will be Christ's disciple, to follow the way of the Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?
- Do you promise to grow with your child in the Christian faith, to help your child be a faithful member of Christ's church, by celebrating Christ's presence, by furthering Christ's mission in all the world, and by offering nurture of the Christian church so that she/he may affirm her/his baptism?
- Will you accept the love, support and care of the members of St. John's United Church of Christ as you strive to faithfully fulfill the promises you are making here today?

You will want to give careful consideration to the promises you are making as you answer these questions. These questions and answers establish an agreement or covenant between you, your child, the local church and God. After say,

“Yes,” to these questions you will be expected to model Christian discipleship for your child by being an active family in the life and fellowship of St. John’s United Church of Christ.

In addition to your commitment to God and the local church on behalf of your child, the members of St. John’s United Church of Christ will promise their “love, support and care” to you. This comes in many forms as needs arise. The members of St. John’s United Church of Christ take this responsibility very seriously. We offer an outstanding ministry to children and families as they grow together in Christ.

This Is A Beginning Time

When your child reaches an age of understanding, she/he will be invited to affirm the promises you make on his/her behalf at baptism. This affirmation process is both a process and an event. It includes classes and experiences in the community as well as the wider church setting. A rite or ceremony called Confirmation marks the completion of the formal affirmation of baptism process. Our ministry to you and your child will lead naturally to that moment.

Because you are entering into the baptismal covenant with God and the local church on behalf of your child, it is appropriate that parents and sponsors be baptized. If you have not been baptized, you will want to consider baptism for

yourself before your child is baptized. The actual baptisms can take place on the same day. Baptism preparation is offered to youth and adults prior to their baptism.

Taking the Next Step

Parents who want to have their children baptized are invited to schedule time to talk about their decision with our Pastor. You may call 616-453-2497 to schedule your appointment. Pastor will schedule the date for the baptism when you meet with him. At least two weeks notice is required between your initial appointment and the baptism service.

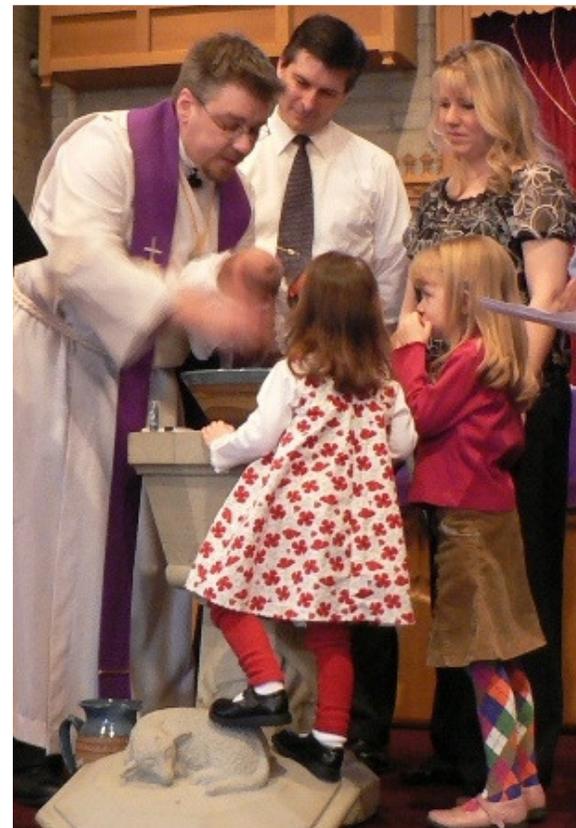


**St. John's
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Baptizing Your Child



**St. John's
United Church of Christ**

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