

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.

Is Re-baptism necessary?

The United Church of Christ recognizes the validity of all baptisms, therefore there is no need for re-baptism. If there is a question about whether baptism has taken place, a conditional phrase may be added as a person is baptized, such as "if you are not already baptized." It is a well-accepted practice, however, for people to renew their baptismal vows in a service of baptismal renewal.

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 a recognition of its commitment. 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.

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.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM & BAPTISMAL RENEWAL

INVITATION

Pastor: Dear friends, on this day of re-creation we recall Christ's baptism, and we claim and remember our own.

All people: *We gather at this font of living water to celebrate the gift of God's redeeming grace.*

Pastor: For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

All People: *For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, male or female—and were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

Pastor: Now you are the body of Christ - individually members of it.

PRESENTATION & QUESTIONS OF CANDIDATES

Pastor: Do you desire to be baptized into the faith and family of Jesus Christ?

Candidate: **I do.**

Pastor: Do you renounce the powers of evil and desire the freedom of new life in Christ?

Candidate: **I do.**

Pastor: Do you profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Candidate: **I do.**

Pastor: Do you promise by the grace of God to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best as you are able?

Candidate: **I promise, with the help of God.**

Pastor: Do you promise, according to the grace given you, to grow in the Christian faith and to be a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ, celebrating Christ's presence and furthering Christ's mission in all the world?

Candidate: **I promise, with the help of God.**

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH BY ENTIRE CONGREGATION

Pastor: Do you believe in God?

Church: **I believe in God, the Creator of heaven and earth.**

Pastor: Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

Church: **I believe in Jesus Christ, the one and only Son of God.**

Pastor: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

Church: **I believe in the Holy Spirit.**

Pastor: Do you renew and affirm the promises made at your baptism?

Church: **I do.**

Pastor: Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ.

Church: **I do.**
Pastor: Will you continue in the apostle's teaching and community, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer.

Church: **I will, with God's help.**
Pastor: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of all people?

Church: **I will, with God's help.**
Pastor: Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

Church: **I do.**
Pastor: Let us pray.
All people: ***In this and all we do, keep us faithful to our Savior Jesus Christ, forever and ever. Amen.***

BLESSING OF WATER

Pastor: John the Baptist told his disciples that he baptized them with water but the one to come would baptize with the Holy Spirit. As we receive the mark of our baptismal vows, we recognize the movement of the Holy Spirit within us and among. Let us pray.

Bless by your Holy Spirit, gracious God, this water. By your Holy Spirit save those who confess the name of Jesus Christ that sin may have no power over them. Create new life in the one baptized this day that she may rise in Christ. For those renewing their baptismal vows, in feeling the Holy Spirit infused water may we be reminded of our baptism into Jesus Christ and that by the power of your Holy Spirit we may be kept faithful until you receive us at last in your eternal.

All people: ***Glory to you eternal God, the one who was, and is, and shall always be, world without end. Amen.***

ACT OF BAPTISM FOR NEW CANDIDATES

Pastor: By what name will you be called?
Candidate: (State full name)
Pastor: I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All people: ***Amen.***
Pastor: The Holy Spirit be upon you child of God, disciple of Christ, and member of the church.

Pastor: Are you ready with God's help to guide and encourage this young person by counsel and example, in prayer and with love, to follow in the way of Jesus Christ?

Sponsor: **I am.**

THE CHURCH REMEMBERS BAPTISM

(As you are able to do so comfortably, please stand)
Pastor: Eternal God, you have come to us in Jesus Christ, given us new birth by water and the Holy Spirit and forgiven all our sins. Bless us now with the grace we need to fulfill what we have promised.

All people: ***Keep us faithful to our Savior Jesus Christ, forever and ever. Amen.***

Worshippers are invited to come forward, as they are able, to be marked with the baptismal water and receive a personal blessing.

(For those worshipping virtually)

Pastor: Please dip your finger in the water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead repeating these words:

Church: **I am God's beloved. I am baptized.**

After all who desire a personal blessing, Pastor Laura will use an evergreen branch (a sign of eternal life) dipped into the baptismal water and sprinkle the entire congregation while offering a communal blessing.

Pastor: Let us pray together, in one voice.
All people: ***Gracious God, bless by your Holy Spirit, this newly baptized young person. May she be filled with joy; may she never be ashamed to confess a personal faith in you. Bless her parents. May they always show her deep and genuine gratitude for the gift of her life. In thanksgiving may they love her and make her spiritual growth a priority, even as they tend to her bodily needs. Bless too, all your faithful people touched by the baptismal waters. Give to us, strength for life's journey, courage in time of suffering, the joy of faith, the freedom of love, and the hope of new life; through Jesus Christ, who makes us one. Amen.***

Baptism: What does it mean?

HOW WE PRACTICE BAPTISM AT STARVIEW UCC

Our members have been baptized by a handful of water from our baptismal font, by immersion in a member's swimming pool, and in a local stream of water. Some are baptized as infants - their spiritual development entrusted for the time being to their parents and the congregation. Others are baptized when they confirm their faith as teens or as adults. If you would like to be baptized, your first step is to talk with Pastor Laura so that together you can prepare the ritual which makes sense in your faith journey.

(More Baptism information on the next page)