

BAPTISM
AT
FIRST PARISH OF WESTWOOD



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A GUIDE FOR BAPTISM

The following is a general guide to help answer some common questions about baptism at First Parish Westwood. It is always best to contact the Pastor, as circumstances can vary with each family.

First Parish Westwood strongly encourages that anyone seeking baptism for their children or themselves to have a relationship with First Parish Westwood. Since the members of the church are making promises to support those seeking baptism as they learn and grow as a Christian, the presence of those seeking baptism is important.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

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.

Baptism, then, is the sacrament by which one is initiated into membership in the Christian church.

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.

The Pastor of the First Parish Westwood will officiate for Baptisms in the church. Participation by other clergy will be at the discretion of the pastor.

WHO MAY BE BAPTIZED?

Infants, children, youth and adults may be baptized in the First Parish Westwood. 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.

As part of the United Church of Christ, we recognize the validity of all baptisms; therefore, there is no need for re-baptism.

PLANNING FOR BAPTISM

Baptism may take place during a worship service where the community is gathered.

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. For this reason, baptism is celebrated in the presence of the community gathered for worship. Baptism is not a private rite or celebration. However, in those rare occasions or urgent circumstances the Pastor will gladly speak with you about such an option.

When you seek baptism, the church and Pastor are responsible for preparing you to fully appreciate this sacrament. You should understand its meaning for yourself or your child and your own responsibility toward your child and the church.

With the serious nature of the baptismal promises, a time of preparation between the pastor and the individual or the parents (in the case of a child) is essential. A baptism date will be set early in conversation with the pastor. In terms of a date, you should be planning ahead between 2 and 3 months.

Before the baptism, you can expect to meet with the pastor about 3 times. At convenient meeting times and places, the pastor and individual(s) have an opportunity to explore the meaning of baptism. The amount of preparation time may vary from family to family (eg. new to this tradition; whether this is a first baptism or a second baptism in this church)

As baptism includes pledges of support of the community, sharing in worship is important before the baptism. You should be prepared to attend worship as much as possible. This time of praise, prayer and contemplation of the Word, with others, helps to open our eyes to the presence of God and the power of community.

Church is a place that is necessary to live out your baptismal promises, so after the baptism, continuing in worship in this faith community or another will be vital.