How do I arrange for baptism?

A call to our minister will initiate the process. He will meet with the family to discuss the significance of baptism, to answer questions and to make arrangements. He will then report to the Church Cabinet.

Is there a fee for baptism or a contribution expected?

No. It is the assumption that the family (if members) are already making a regular financial contribution (pledge) for the work of the church. There is no additional charge or expectation of honoraria for the ministry of the Church.

What is the appropriate dress for baptism?

Clothing that is normally worn for worship is appropriate. Some families have special clothing for infants being baptized; this, too, is appropriate.

May we take pictures during the service?

No. The taking of pictures is not permitted during services of worship. We welcome and encourage the taking of pictures after the conclusion of the service.

May young children receive the elements when the congregation celebrates the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Communion/Eucharist)?

It is the opinion of the Minister that baptized children may receive the bread and cup (grape juice) if their parents give permission.
As Jesus Christ welcomed children to him, so does the Church, as it too, receives children in his name.

Does First Church recognize the baptisms performed by other churches?

Yes, First Church recognizes the baptisms of all other Christian churches that use the Trinitarian formula of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.



First Congregational Church
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The Sacrament of Baptism

As it is understood at First Congregational Church



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The Purpose of this brochure is to provide information about the sacrament of baptism as it is understood and practiced at First Congregational Church. The minister welcomes the opportunity to talk to persons who are considering baptism.

Baptism is an act of thanksgiving, an expression of gratitude for the gifts of life. It is a recognition of the mystery which is at the center of life.

Baptism is a sacrament of the Christian Church. As such it is understood to be the rite of entrance into the membership of the Church.

- a symbol of cleansing
- a sign of God's regenerative and renewing power in our life
- a sign of our welcome into the household of God

Baptism is a sign of God's love for us and a recognition of the fact that we are God's children. The congregation has a special responsibility in that all baptized persons are under its care. In receiving the sacrament the person baptized, or parent (s), affirms Christ as his/her Lord and Savior, and makes the commitment to be Christ's faithful disciples in and through the worship and work of Christ's Church.

What is the significant of water and how is it administered?

Water is a symbol of cleansing in many cultures. The act of baptism as recorded in the descriptions of John the Baptist's ministry (Mark 1, for example) involved total immersion, signifying not only the cleansing power of the waters of the Jordan but also the symbolic "dying" and "rising again" to a new and different life. This new life is also symbolized in the giving of a name.

While baptism by total immersion is possible for Congregationalists who request it, more typically the water is sprinkled or poured on the head of the person being baptized.

What is the difference between *believer baptism* and *infant baptism*?

Believer baptism refers to those who are old enough to make their own decision and to affirm their own faith.

An adolescent person about 14 years of age (9th grade) is ordinarily the youngest considered for believer baptism.

In the case of *infant baptism* one or both parents affirm their faith and their intent to guide their children in the way of Jesus. The congregation on its part expresses its intention to share the good news of the Gospel, to help the growing child know Christ's commands, and by the fellowship of the congregation to strengthen the family's ties with the household of God. It is expected that by their own life in the Church, the parents will prepare their children for the confirmation of his/her baptismal vows when he/she reaches adolescence.

Is there ever a time when the sacrament is administered other than during the public worship of the congregation?

Only in the case of sickness or other disability. If possible, deacons of the congregation should be present to manifest the communal nature of the sacrament.

Must we (I) be a member of First Church to have our child baptized there?

No. We baptize infant children of non-members but parents must promise to participate in a Christian Church and at least one parent publically affirm the Christian faith by answering the questions.

Must I have my child baptized?

No. Our tradition affirms that ministers shall counsel parents that they have the responsibility for presenting their children for baptism as infants or nurturing the children toward baptism upon their public profession of faith.

If I choose not to have my child baptized as an infant what is the appropriate time for the young person?

The appropriate time at First Church is 9th grade, when young people participate in a class designed to prepare them to make their own public profession of faith.

What about god parents?

Congregationalists believe that it is the entire congregation rather than individuals which functions as godparents. However adults, chosen by the parents, can stand with the family and be recognized as 'godparents' as they promise to assist the parents. We do welcome friends and other members of the family (especially sisters and brothers of the infant being baptized) to be part of the group at the front of the sanctuary.

Why is a deacon involved in the service of baptism?

The participating deacon, represents the Church Cabinet. He or she assists the Minister. In private baptisms (due to extraordinary circumstances,) a deacon is present and represents the congregation.