to attend worship regularly over a period of time (a minimum of several months) so that you can make an informed choice of Grace UMC as the church your family will attend in the years to come. Being sure of your commitment assures everyone involved in the covenant of baptism that we will be able to fulfill the promises we make, and so allows us to commit our support and help to you and to your child honestly, confidently and joyfully.

**Baptism Is A Beginning, Not An End**

Baptism is God’s gift of grace, but it is not the source of salvation. Baptism must be followed by a response that leads us into relationship with Jesus Christ. It is God who saves us.

**Baptism Is Not A Repeatable Act**

If an adult or child has been baptized in a church of another denomination, the baptism is recognized by the United Methodist Church. We do not rebaptize individuals of any age believing that, since God is the agent in baptism, God “does it right the first time.” Instead, we are given the opportunity to reaffirm our faith in the Covenant Renewal Service, and during the baptismal service as well.

**Inquiring About Baptism**

If you desire baptism for yourself or for your child, set a time to speak with the pastor. The pastor will help you to understand the meaning of baptism in the United Methodist Church, explain the baptismal service, answer questions and talk with you about the commitments and responsibilities which are a part of the baptismal covenant.



**BAPTISM GUIDELINES**

**GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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**Baptism Is Sacrament and Covenant**

 Baptism and Holy Communion are the two sacraments recognized by the United Methodist Church. It is our understanding that these were instituted or commanded by Christ in the Gospels.

 A **sacrament**is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” Sacraments are sign-acts combining words, actions, and physical elements which express and convey God’s grace: God’s “unmerited, unconditional love and acceptance,” freely given to us all. United Methodists believe that the sacraments are special means of grace. We believe that God’s presence in the sacraments is real, but it must be accepted by human faith if it is to transform human lives. The sacraments do not convey grace magically, but they are powerful channels through which God has chosen to make grace available to us. Methodism’s founder, John Wesley, identified baptism as the sacrament of initiation by which we are admitted as members of Christ’s Church.

 Baptism is a **covenant**, involving promises and responsibilities for both parties. In baptism the Church affirms that it is bound to God in a covenant which connects God, the community of faith (the local church) and the person being baptized. All three are necessary to fulfill the promises made in baptism.

**Baptism Is By Water and the Holy Spirit**

 Both children and adults are baptized **by water and the Holy Spirit,** the giver of new life. We believe that the Spirit works in our lives before, during and after baptism.

 Water is a symbol of cleansing, of death to old life, and rising to begin a new life in Christ. Sprinkling, pouring and immersion are all accepted ways of administering the water of baptism.

**Baptism Is Membership In The Church**

 Baptism is an **initiation into membership** in Christ’s church, the United Methodist denomination, and the local church. The people of the congregation make promises to the person being baptized: to act as spiritual mentors, and to provide a community of love and support as he or she grows in faith. This is why, outside of extreme or very unusual circumstances, the baptismal service takes place during regular times of worship and in the presence of the congregation.

 It is important to recognize and to honor this understanding of baptism as membership in the local church. While a baptized infant or young child obviously cannot be expected to take on the same roles as adult members of the congregation, he or she becomes a direct participant in the life of a specific local church as a **baptized member**. The church takes on the responsibility of nurturing each baptized person toward growth in learning and in faith, in ways that are appropriate to the stages of life. Our hope is that the child will later come to affirm and accept the Christian faith for himself or herself through Confirmation as a **professing member** of the church.

Parents who present a child for baptism are **promising to** **fulfill the commitment** **they make** during the baptismal service not only to provide their child with a Christian example in the home, but also **to be regularly present with their child in church** so that the people of the congregation can uphold their promises and fulfill their responsibility to the baptized child. This is a serious commitment, and one which should not be made without a clear understanding of parents’ responsibilities and a firm and sincere intention to follow through. If you are new to the congregation, you will be asked

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