

The Village Steeple

From the Pastor's Desk: Celebrating the Sacraments



This Week's Lectionary Texts

15th Sunday after
Pentecost

Jeremiah 18:1-11

Psalm 139

Philemon 1-21

Luke 14:25-33

Sacraments have been called “an outward sign of an inward grace” for centuries now. Most mainline denominations, including our own, understand them this way. But, for many, the meaning of sacraments is never really discussed in the church. We all know that sacraments are “good things”, but do we really understand what they are and what our tradition believes about them?

In the United Church of Christ we celebrate two sacraments: Baptism and Communion (also called the Lord's Supper). We hold these two celebrations as central to the life of faith, and we affirm their value and

meaning in our lives together. Once a month we celebrate Communion, and we celebrate Baptism as often as it is requested.

Other traditions, including our Catholic brothers and sisters, celebrate seven sacraments. Along with Baptism and Communion they celebrate confirmation, marriage, ordination, anointing of the sick (formerly the Last Rites) and confession.

As Protestants we practice these five other spiritual disciplines, but we do not understand them as sacraments because we do not believe they were specifically instituted as such by Christ. (continued)

THIS MONTH'S BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Sept. 2 - Mindy Childs

Sept. 2 - Emily Heath

Sept. 6 - Eric Kurucz

Sept. 7 - Louise Severance

Sept. 9 - Riley Childs

Sept. 9 - Alex Kurucz

Sept. 9 - Dick Severance

Sept. 10 - Frank Smith

Sept. 13 - Mary Schoonmaker

Sept. 29 - George Newton

Sept. 6, 1952 - Dick & Louise Severance

Sept. 24 - Kelly & Mike Murphy

Sept. 30 - Mitch & Laurel Cashman

Pastor's Note (continued)

That does not mean we do not think they are important. It simply means that they have a different meaning in our church.

There are a few other things to know about each sacrament. When celebrating Communion we as members of the UCC affirm a traditional Reformed perspective about what happens. Unlike our Catholic peers who believe that the bread and wine is transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ, and unlike Baptists who believe the meal is just a service of remembrance, we take a middle way of understanding.

The UCC, as a Reformed church, believes that when we celebrate Communion we are brought spiritually closer to Christ and lifted into his presence. We also believe that we are spiritually joined with believers of every time and place in the meal. We literally

“commune” with God and all the saints.

In terms of Baptism, we understand that in this sacrament an individual joins the community of Christ. How we understand this varies a little depending on whether we are baptizing an adult or baby.

An adult makes a free choice to be baptized. Some churches will only baptize adults. But we also baptize infants. The reason why is that we believe God claims us before we claim God. Even before we know what is happening in our lives, God is already there and active. And so when we baptize a child we are saying that this child belongs to God and we will walk with them in their life of faith.

This Sunday we will be celebrating Baptism at West Dover and Communion at Wilmington. In both celebrations, may you experience God's good grace.

Calendar

Sunday, September 5

Worship, 9am
Coffee Hour, 10am
Bible Study, following

Tuesday, September 7

LKG, 4pm
Spiritual Book Group, 7pm

Wednesday, September 8

Coffee Hour, 8-10am

Saturday, September 11

AA, 8pm

A Reminder:

The Deerfield Valley Food Pantry needs donations in order to supply the growing need in our area. We have designated the first Sunday of the month, Communion Sunday, as a canned food drive day. Please bring soup or tuna if you are able.

**This Week's Link:
Baptism in the United Church of Christ**

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



<http://www.ucc.org/worship/baptism/>

Learn more about how the UCC understands baptism, how we practice it, and what the promises we make in baptism mean.

**STAYING
CONNECTED**

If you or a loved one are sick, hospitalized or in crisis please call the Rev. Emily Heath at (802) 258-1143 at any time.

West Dover
Congregational Church
Route 100
PO Box 710
West Dover, VT 05356
(802) 464-1195

www.westdovercc.com