

Frequently Asked Questions For Prospective and New Members

Thank you for your interest in the United Church of Christ and our community of faith at St John's UCC - Chesterfield. Attached is a booklet that provides brief answers to many "frequently asked questions" by our visitors, friends, and new members. Hopefully this guide will help you learn more about St John's and consider how to continue on your faith journey in a Christian community.

We truly welcome you to St John's UCC and wish all God's blessings on you and your loved ones. Please reach out to us with any questions or special needs.

Dale Bartels, Pastor
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Tell Me About St. John's and the UCC

What is the UCC, and What do We Believe?

Welcome to the United Church of Christ – a community of faith that works to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. The UCC was founded in 1957 as the union of several different Christian traditions. Our motto “that they may all be one” is Jesus’ prayer for the unity of the church.

The UCC is one of the most diverse Christian churches in the United States, a progressive denomination that engages heart and mind. While preserving the relevant portions of heritage of history dating back to the Pilgrims of the 16th century, the UCC has proven itself capable of moving forward, tying faith to social justice and shaping its theology and service in an every-changing world.

Our motto at St John's United Church of Christ – “wherever you are on life's journey – you are welcome here!”

How is a UCC church governed”?

Each UCC congregation is “self-governed”, meaning it establishes its own by-laws, owns its own property, and chooses its own pastors and staff. That said, there is a “national body” of the UCC known as the General Synod whose offices are located in Cleveland, Ohio. The General Synod, through support and participation of churches across the country and around the world, recommends policies and procedures that each individual congregation can choose to accept or not. The General Synod also oversees the significant worldwide missionary efforts of our membership through 1) distribution of financial contributions by local congregations to “Our Church's Wider Mission”, 2) education of clergy, lay ministers, and 3) support to missionaries in the field. The General Synod is supported by the activities of regional organizations of UCC leaders (e.g. the Missouri Conferences and the St. Louis Association) who focus their support on the needs of local congregations and communities.

How do you select a pastor?

Each congregation is responsible for selecting their pastoral staff. Through a process known as “calling”, a congregation communicates their need for a new or additional minister to support their church. A “search committee” of church members is convened that represents the thoughts and needs of the congregation. Often the regional and national offices of the UCC help identify candidates and support the congregation through the call process that ultimately leads to selection of a new pastor.

Tell me about Pastor Dale

Pastor Dale and his wife, Marti, were called to the St. John's congregation in 2004. They have served churches in both Missouri and Illinois during their 30+ year ministry. Pastor Dale was educated at SIUE in Edwardsville after which he was graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis as an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. His ministry focuses on study of scripture and application of God's word to our daily lives.

He has developed extensive programs for our children, youth and adults since joining St. John's. He and Marti have two married daughters living in St. Louis, both of whom are raising young families.

What kinds of worship services are offered at St. John's?

We believe that worship is central to our responsibility as Christians, and each Sunday we offer two different worship styles to meet the needs of our diverse congregation.

At 9 am we hold a "Heritage" worship service that includes Bible readings, singing hymns, musical offerings from both vocal and handbell choirs and other musicians and a message from the pastor.

At 11:15 am we offer a more contemporary "Celebration" service that also includes Bible readings and the pastor's message but which utilizes modern praise music accompanied by musicians and song leaders.

If you are interested we are always looking for new voices among our singers and for musicians of all types. Contact our Music Director, Ruth Notch through the church office or at rnotch@sbcglobal.net.

Join us for either of these services and be sure to try the Fellowship Hour from 10-11 am where friends who participate in either worship service meet to share coffee, donuts and good conversation with one another.

Is there childcare Sunday mornings?

Yes – there is a nursery available throughout the morning for infants and toddlers staffed by adult volunteers. We encourage parents to bring their older children to worship services.

How do you baptize in the UCC?

Commonly, children are baptized as infants or young toddlers, but anyone who seeks the Sacrament of Baptism can speak to Pastor Dale.

Who can take communion in your church?

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is our expression of our love for Jesus Christ and for one another. We commune together as a congregation on the first Sunday of each month at both worship services, and several other times during the year at special services. We warmly welcome anyone who visits with us to participate in the Sacrament of Communion during our worship services. Children may commune when their parents feel they are ready to participate.

[Tell Me More About Your Programs and Community Activities](#)

What Programs are there for Children and Youth?

There are many opportunities for children and youth at St John's!

On Sundays from 10:15-11:00 we offer **Sunday School** for children age 3 through 12th grade. Our preschool class starts at age 3 and continues until children start Kindergarten. Our K – 5th graders participate in the Rotation Model of Sunday School. The curriculum is built on Bible studies that are taught by members of the church. Each study module (or "rotation") last several weeks and uses arts, videos, computers, storytelling, drama, games, and even cooking to convey the meaning of the Scripture to our children in age-appropriate settings. The Middle School and High School youth each meet in a class that explores faith questions they are experiencing.

St John's also offers a very special mid-week program known as **LOGOS** for children in 1st – 12th grade. Held on Wednesday late afternoons into the evening, this program focuses on Bible study, learning worship skills (singing, hand chimes, drum circle, puppets, and drama) recreation and games, and a family supper. Each week we have dozens of children, older youth and adults participating in LOGOS from teaching classes, leading choirs, cooking church supper or cleaning up! Our Wednesday LOGOS program offers a very successful bridge from Sunday to Sunday for both our children and adults.

Each summer we hold a **Vacation Bible School (VBS)** for our children and their friends age 3 through 5th grade. This program is generally held for one week in the evenings and is supported through the volunteer teachers, cooks, and cleanup crew from our membership.

Our Middle & High School youth group is known as **NO LIMITS**. They spend many Sunday evenings exploring their faith and having fun at St. John's. They also enjoy many fun activities away from church including retreats and summer trips. In the past few years we have enjoyed mission trips to Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Florida, and Louisiana.

All of the children and youth studies and social activities are developed by our Director of Christian Education and Youth Ministry – Cathy Pettibone. See Cathy (cathypettibone@sbcglobal.net) or Pastor Dale for information!

How does confirmation work at St John's?

Generally, children are confirmed during the 8th grade in the UCC. At the start of the school year, Pastor Dale calls the confirmation class together, meeting on Wednesday evenings during the LOGOS program. In the spring, those candidates who choose to may confirm their faith during a special worship service. We welcome anyone who is interested in confirming their faith to speak to Pastor Dale about options.

What's the STJECC?

The **St. John's Early Childhood Center** – or STJECC – was established more than twenty years ago by members of our church to support the needs of families with small children. The STJECC is a fully-accredited, state inspected program that offers classes for children as young as 18 months up to 4 year olds. Classes are available Monday-Friday. Contact Karen Gatti, our Executive Director at 636-530-7529 or visit our website www.discoverstjohnsucc.org for more information.

What about Adult Programs and Activities?

There are many options available to adults of all ages for study, mission work in the community, working with the children, and for social activities and Christian fellowship.

- Bible study **small groups** meet throughout the week and are always looking for new members.
- Sunday mornings also offer **Adult Education** options during the Fellowship Hour that include Bible Study and discussion of contemporary issues.
- Wednesday mornings at 6:30 am the Men's Fellowship meets for bible study, prayer, and breakfast – everyone is welcome!
- In addition, Pastor Dale teaches bible studies throughout the year with classes offered during the day and in the evening.

Social activities are offered as well:

- Quilters would love new participants at their morning quilting sessions.
- We have a co-ed softball team that is always seeking new teammates.
- Many adults enjoy participating in LOGOS and other youth activities by helping with teaching, cooking, and setup/cleanup.
- Our church facilities are always in need of small repairs for those willing “handy-people” in our midst.
- Join us for any social activity like the church picnic, potluck suppers, bingo nights, pancake breakfasts and other gatherings for all ages

What community organizations/missions do you support?

We support many local charities through both financial contributions and the active volunteerism of our congregation.

- Every Child's Hope (Formerly Evangelical Children's Home)
- Neighborhood Houses
- Emmaus Homes
- Circle of Concern
- Lydia's House
- Habitat for Humanity

We have sent mission teams for New Orleans Relief and to other destinations. We actively work to sustain our local UCC camp for children and adults, Camp Mo-Val.

Is St John's a Green Church?

We have a strong "green" commitment to environmental stewardship through an aggressive recycling program and highway cleanup mission, and we were recently awarded a community award for our efforts.

What global missions and charities do you support?

For the past several years, we have sponsored a mission trip by some of our college-aged members to orphanages and nursing homes in Russia. These young people bring back the remarkable stories of spreading their love for Jesus to some of our neediest neighbors in the world.

We have built a strong mission relationship in Ghana called "The Shepherd's Center" that supports the elderly in poor villages of Ghana with medical supplies and monitoring. Some members visited the Ghana center recently.

Globally, the UCC is strongly committed to meeting the needs of the worldwide community in need. Through our local financial contributions to the UCC's "Our Church's Wider Mission", we see the distribution of our benevolences around the world to people and communities. Read more about the UCC and its missions at www.ucc.org.

Do you have relationships with other churches and faith- organizations?

St. John's is one of more than fifty UCC churches in the Greater St. Louis region. We remain connected through the work of our local UCC St. Louis and Missouri conference leaders. In our local area, there are several churches that form a local "west county" relationship that include St. Thomas, Ivy Chapel, Parkway UCC, Kirkwood UCC, St Johns – Manchester, and St John's – Chesterfield (that's us!). Each year those churches share special services together, e.g. Thanksgiving time, Easter sunrise, and other prayer services. St. John's also participates in other local ecumenical activities, e.g. National Day of Prayer, Worldwide Communion Day, etc.

Logistics About the Church

When is the church office open?

The church office is generally open during business hours, Monday through Friday. Our Church Office is staffed by Charlene Brizendine who can be reached at 636-532-0540 Ext. 21 or by email at stjuccchesterfield@sbcglobal.net.

How do I reach Pastor Dale?

You can contact Pastor Dale by calling the church office 636-532-0540 Ext. 23 or by email pastorbartels@sbcglobal.net.

How do I get the newsletter?

Charlene in the office can get you on our e-mail distribution of our bi-monthly newsletter and other special announcements. Or visit us on the web at www.discoverystjohnsucc.org.

Where is the coatroom? Do you have an elevator?

Yes – hang coats downstairs in Fellowship Hall or upstairs near the sanctuary. And, we have an elevator for those who cannot manage the stairs with ease. Pick up donuts and coffee while you're in Fellowship Hall!

Is the church available for activities, e.g. sports, receptions, meetings?

We have many facilities at St. John's including a large Fellowship Hall with an attached, small kitchen, a separate, large kitchen, full gymnasium, community meeting rooms, classrooms and an outdoor pavilion. Contact the church office if you are interested in using the space for activities. There are generally small fees associated with the use of the building facilities for various events. We welcome both members and other community requests.

Can you help with weddings or funerals?

Please contact Charlene in the office or Pastor Dale directly about wedding planning or if you need support during the death of a loved one. There are some fees associated with the use of the church for both members and non-members.

Can a non- member be baptized or married at St. John's?

Yes. Contact Pastor Dale at 636-532-0540 Ext. 23 or pastorbartels@sbcglobal.net

I'm Thinking About Membership

What are the responsibilities of “membership”?

Jesus said "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39

At St. John's, we hope that all our members will worship together regularly, identify ways for spiritual growth, contribute to the health and growth of our congregation, and seek ways to help our neighbors in need. St. John's and the UCC offer many ways for its membership to live into this mission to build the Body of Christ together.

Are there specific expectations for giving?

There are no prescribed giving expectations - each individual or family considers their level of giving, both financial and through other means of stewardship, such as sharing our gifts of time and talent.

Are there specific expectations for volunteering?

There are no prescribed expectations, but we encourage all our members to get involved in some way in church activities, both for the good of the recipients and for their own spiritual growth and enjoyment in the Christian fellowship.

Who do I talk to about joining? What's involved?

Speak with Pastor Dale at any time. You might ask to speak to recent new members for their perspectives. We “welcome” new members in a very brief ceremony at the beginning of our worship services. Or, you can arrange to “make it official” privately with Pastor Dale.

I grew up in another denomination – does that matter?

Many of our members were raised in other Christian traditions, either other Protestant denominations or in the Roman Catholic church – others may have little to no experience in a church. St. John's and the UCC welcome you, regardless of where you are on your spiritual journey, to our community of Christian faith and love.

OK – I'd Like to Join the Church! Now tell me . . .

Help! Can I get a directory of names with pictures?

Yes! Ask Charlene in the office.

What are some ways to get involved right away?

This document reviews lots of the activities going on at St. John's. And there are other formal Ministry Teams that you can join, such as:

- Christian Education
- Worship
- Evangelism and Membership
- Stewardship
- Missions
- Youth Activities
- Intergenerational Fellowship

Just mention your interests, and the connection will be made – whether it is an occasional task or something more frequent. Our advice - get involved in something – it will make a big difference in your church experience.

How do I get offering envelopes?

Inquire at the office – they should be available to you. You can also arrange to give to the church by automated, e- giving.

Are there other donations the church needs?

We appreciate all kinds of donations – maybe it's stocking the kitchen pantry, providing Sunday School or LOGOS supplies, special gifts for the music program, for the sanctuary or for some church improvement. And, of course, we collect many items for distribution to community charities throughout the year.

Are there new member activities or meetings?

Occasional new member meetings are held and special announcements are made. We need to hear from you! What would help you feel at home and connected?

**No Matter Where You Are On Life's Journey,
You Are Welcome Here**

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