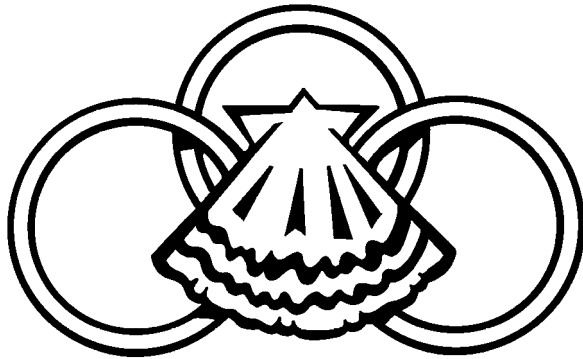


Lutheran Discipleship Resource

BAPTISMAL HANDBOOK
for
Candidates,
Parents, and Sponsors

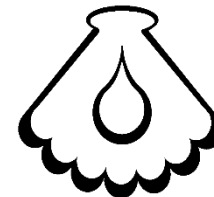


The Sacrament of
Holy Baptism

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Sola's Electronic Education Resource

This pdf has been pre-paged to photocopy back to back,
to make a 12 page handbook (5.5 x 8.5 inches)



This handbook is intended for all who wish to learn more about this Church's theology and practice of baptism, including adults who are preparing for baptism, as well as parents who are bringing their children to be baptized.

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Prayers for Use at Home

Prayers Before Meals:

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest,
let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen

Be present at our table Lord;
be here and everywhere adored.
These mercies bless and grant that we
may strengthened for thy service be. Amen

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts
which we are about to receive from thy bounty,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer at Bedtime:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
Guide me safely through the night,
and wake me in the morning light. Amen

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen

BAPTISMAL HANDBOOK

for Candidates, Parents and Sponsors

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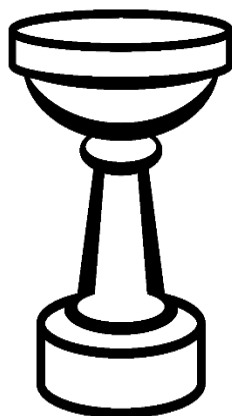
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Introduction

According to the Scriptures, Baptism is a promise made by God to his people, through which we receive the gifts of forgiveness, life, and the Spirit. It is the beginning of our journey as a child of God and as a member of the Christian Church. In the words of our baptismal service:

In Holy Baptism, our gracious heavenly Father liberates us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of Baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life. By water and the Holy Spirit we are made members of the Church, which is the body of Christ. As we live with him and with his people, we grow in faith, love and obedience to the will of God.
Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 121



Requesting a Baptism

People who live in the community and currently attend this church may request a baptism for themselves or their child by contacting the pastor in person.

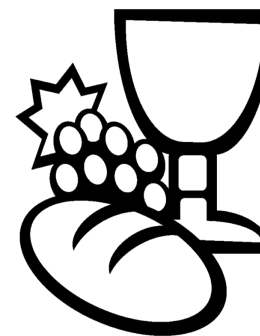
Individuals from outside the community who request baptism will be directed to seek a local congregation where they can be involved on a regular basis. The pastor can provide the names of other Lutheran congregations which may be contacted in regard to baptism and membership.

Participation in Communion

Adults received through baptism are considered "confirmed" members of the congregation by virtue of their baptismal instruction and their affirmation of faith. They may begin receiving the Lord's Supper immediately after baptism. No additional confirmation instruction is required.

Children baptized above the normal age of First Communion may begin receiving the Lord's Supper immediately after baptism, or may wait to participate in the next available First Communion Instruction series.

Children baptized below the age of First Communion wait until the age of instruction, according to the normal policy of the congregation.



A final word

If there are any further questions regarding the policies and procedures for baptisms in this congregation, please feel free to contact the pastor.

Baptismal Information

The following information is needed for the church records for each baptism:

Name of the Baptized: _____

Date of Baptism: _____

Parents' Names: _____

Birthdate: _____

Birthplace (City/State): _____

Sponsors' Names: _____

Sponsors' Church: _____

Mementos & Pictures

In addition to the baptismal certificate, the baptized receive as mementos: a baptismal cloth which is used to dry the head after baptism, and a baptismal candle, which is lit and given during the service). A certificate of baptism is also provided as a record and memento of the day.

Pictures may be taken after the service, including family, friends and sponsors, as well as the pastor. Some families choose to have a small reception at the church or in their home.

Offerings

Since baptism is a Sacrament offered freely by the grace of God, there is never a fee associated with the rite. Nothing is paid to the pastor or the church.

If the family chooses to give a special offering or gift on the day of the baptism, it should be placed in the regular offering or designated as a memorial.

Expectations of Baptismal Candidates

To request baptism for oneself or one's child, indicates the desire to be an active part of a congregation. For this reason, baptisms are conducted at this church only in cases where there can and will be a continued connection with this congregation, whether the baptism is for adults or children.

In the case where children are baptized, the congregation will follow-up on its relationship with the child over the years through registration for Sunday School, First Communion Instruction, and Confirmation Instruction.

All baptized babies are included in the "Cradle Roll" of the congregation (a ministry which recognizes the baptismal anniversaries of all our young people).

Important Note: Those who are not interested in continued involvement within a Christian congregation should seriously reconsider their motivation for seeking baptism. Baptism enacts a powerful covenant relationship with God and fellow believers; it is not something to be taken lightly. To treat baptism as nothing more than a simple human ceremony, is to make a mockery of the sacrament and show contempt for the Word of God.



Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow ... So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. (Galatians 6:7-10)

From Martin Luther's Small Catechism

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not water only, but water used together with God's Word and by his command.

What is this Word?

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
(Matthew 28)

What benefits does God give in Baptism?

In Baptism, God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what he has promised.

What is God's promise?

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” *(Mark 16)*

How can water do such great things?

It is not water that does these things, but God's Word with the water and our trust in this Word. Water by itself is only water, but with the Word of God it is a life-giving water, which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.

What does Baptism mean for daily living?

It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.

The Choosing of Sponsors

Sponsors are Christians who promise to support and encourage the faith of the one being baptized.

In the case of children being baptized, parents serve as the primary sponsors, with other friends or family members often designated as "God-parents." On the day of the child's baptism, the sponsors are addressed as follows:

In Christian love you have presented these children for Holy Baptism. You should, therefore, faithfully bring them to the services of God's house, teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. As they grow in years, you should place in their hands the Holy Scriptures and provide for their instruction in the Christian faith, that, living in the covenant of their Baptism and in communion with the Church, they may lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ. (LBW, p. 121)

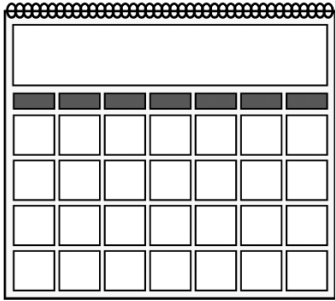
In the case of adults being baptized, friends or fellow church members take the role of sponsor. During the service, the sponsors are addressed as follows:

In Christian love you have presented these people for Holy Baptism. You should, therefore, faithfully care for them and help them in every way as God gives you opportunity, that they may bear witness to the faith we profess, and that, living in the covenant of their Baptism and in communion with the Church, they may lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ. (LBW, p. 122)

When considering who to choose as sponsors, the only requirement is that the sponsors themselves be baptized Christians (though, sponsors do not necessarily have to be Lutheran). The best sponsors are those who are good examples of faith in word and deed, and who are in a position to provide support to the faith of the person being baptized. There is no specific number or gender of sponsors required.

Setting a Date

Arrangements for a baptism are made through the pastor. In many cases, the pastor will ask to set up a meeting with the family to discuss baptism, prior to any date being set on the calendar.



Baptisms are scheduled according to the availability of the Church calendar. Certain Sundays may not be available, because of the particular service being held. More than one person may be baptized at the same service, depending on the number of candidates there may be.

Preparation for Baptism

Whenever a baptism takes place in this church, there is an element of instruction that takes place prior to the baptism.

In the case of children being baptized, the pastor will sit down with the parents before the baptism to describe the service, and say a little about the meaning of what will be taking place. This meeting is usually held in the church office or at the parents' home, in the week prior to the baptism.

In the case of older children being baptized, the pastor will also want to spend some time talking about baptism with the child. This may be done in connection with the meeting above.

In the case of adults being baptized, candidates for baptism will meet with the pastor on a number of occasions -- to talk not only about Baptism, but also to discuss Communion and participation as a member of the church. Adults will also be asked to attend the current education series being led by the pastor.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is an Act of God by which God makes a promise to the person being baptized. The focus is on God's initiative, not our own. It is by God's power that we are given new life and are born again through the waters of baptism.

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:4-5)

Baptism is a Sacrament, that is, a rite of the Church personally commanded by Christ, through which God conveys the promise of the gospel with a physical sign. God uses the natural element of water, to verify his promise of life and forgiveness, leaving no doubt as to whom the promise is directed.

Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Baptism is Universal as the mark of the Christian faith. Even though a person may be baptized in one church or another, no one is ever "baptized a Lutheran" or "baptized a Catholic," etc. All who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are baptized Christians.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Is There an Appropriate Age for Baptism?

Scripture shows that from the beginning of the Christian Church, people have been baptized as the mark of their entry into the fellowship of faith, whether it be as adults, children, or entire households (eg. Acts 16:33).

“Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” (Acts 2:38-39)

Scripture does not require a particular age for baptism, but teaches that we are called to "make disciples of all nations" through baptism and continuing instruction in the Christian faith (Matthew 28:19).

This church practices "General Baptism" which means that it receives candidates to be baptized at whatever age they are presented.

When & Where Do Baptisms Take Place?

It is the regular practice of this Church for baptisms to take place during the Sunday morning worship service, in the presence of the gathered congregation. This emphasizes the fact that baptism is a person's entry into the Christian community, and helps to remind those present of the promise that God has made to us all in the sacrament.

Extenuating circumstances may require that baptisms take place at another time or place. Anyone with particular questions or concerns should discuss them with the pastor.

In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- Jews, Greeks, slaves or free -- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

How Are Baptisms Conducted?

Throughout the history of the Church, baptisms have been conducted in many different ways. Sometimes it is done with the person being fully immersed in water, such as in a lake or river, symbolizing our dying and rising with Christ (Romans 6:4). Often times, baptisms are done with a simple sprinkling of water, symbolizing the cleansing of sin (Acts 22:16). Whatever the case, it is not the *amount* of water used that makes a baptism, but God's Word of promise with the water, spoken to the person being baptized.

In this Church, baptisms are normally done by the method of sprinkling at the baptismal font in the Church's sanctuary.

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you ... (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

Who Participates in the Baptism?

Those participating in the baptism include: God, the person being baptized, the pastor, the parents and/or sponsors, and the members of the congregation.

The pastor presides at the baptismal service, assisted by another representative of the congregation. The service for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is found on pages 121-125 of the Lutheran Book of Worship.

Guest clergy may participate in the ceremony as assistants in the service (through the reading of lessons, prayers, etc.) at the request and invitation of the pastor of this church.

Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22)