

# *Baptism*

A guide for parents & sponsors

**St. John's Lutheran Church**

Salisbury, North Carolina

# Welcome!

*Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19*

Baptism is the time at which God embraces us as His own and overwhelms us with more grace than we can even imagine. Jesus asked that all of his followers be baptized so that we can be united with him across time and space.

## Why infants?

We believe that baptism is God's way of adopting us into his family. It is an acknowledgement of God's first step in our relationship with him – a relationship that began long before we were in our mother's womb. Infant baptism has been a practice of the church throughout its history. The book of Acts indicates that "entire households" were baptized, which would seem to indicate the inclusion of young children.

## The baptismal commitment

While we celebrate God's first step in our lives, baptism invites us to make our own promises to God. The following is asked of the parent and/or person to be baptized:

"In Christian love, you have presented your child for Holy Baptism. You should, therefore, faithfully bring her to the services of God's house and teach her the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments. As she grows in years, you should place in her hands the Holy Scripture and provide for her instruction in the Christian faith, that, living in the covenant of her Baptism and in communion with the church, she may lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ."

## What happens at baptism?

Baptism is a public event. In it the entire Christian community pledges to join that child/adult in the journey of faith. Therefore, baptisms are normally held during Sunday worship. Following the sermon, the candidate and family/sponsors join at the baptismal font. When it is time to baptize, we invite the children of the church to gather around the Baptismal font so that they might participate. After the water portion of the baptism (when sins are "washed clean"), the pastor will anoint the head of the child/adult with oil ("you are sealed in the Holy Spirit"), and give a lighted baptismal candle symboling Jesus as the "light of the world ... the light no darkness can overcome." The child/adult is then welcomed by the entire congregation with warm applause and/or embrace. Baptisms are adapted to services at which they are held: 8:30, 9:27 or 11 am.

## A Celebration

Baptism is a celebration that should be shared with friends and family. On the anniversary of your child's baptism each year, we invite you to light the baptismal candle and share special prayers of thanksgiving and re-commitment.

Martin Luther called baptism, "the daily garment which the Christian is to wear all the time." In fact he encouraged Christians to remember their baptism every day -- "every time you wash your face." His point is that each and every day is a new experience of the cycle of grace: when we remember that we are beloved children of God, humbly recognize our need for God, and give thanks for God's promise of renewal and strength.

One of two sacraments for Lutherans, the other being Holy Communion, Baptism is the entry rite into Christian faith. It is an act instituted by God, performed using water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whereby the baptized is united with Christ.

# What happens in baptismal service?

1. At the beginning of the service of Holy Baptism, the pastor will welcome the candidate, their family and friends on behalf of the church.
2. The parents and sponsors will be asked to publicly affirm that they have a long-term interest in the spiritual development of the child, and intend to actively nurture their faith by prayer, example and regular involvement in the life and worship of the church:

God, who is rich in mercy and love, gives us a new birth into a living hope through the sacrament of baptism. By water and the Word, God delivers us from sin and death and raises us to new life in Jesus Christ. We are united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world. Called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to have your child baptized into Christ? *We do.*

*To the parents:* As you bring your child to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities: to live with him/her among God's faithful people, bring him/her to the word of God and the holy supper, teach him/her the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in his/her hands the holy scriptures, and nurture him/her in faith and prayer, so that he/she may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.

Do you promise to help your child grow in the Christian faith and life? *We do.*

*To the Sponsors:* Do you promise to nurture (child's name) in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help him/her live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church? *We do.*

### 3. The pastor then turns to the congregation for its affirmation:

*To the Congregation:* People of God, do you promise to support this child and pray for him/her in his new life in Christ? **We do.**

### 4. The pastor asks the parents to profess their faith.

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church.

On behalf of your child, do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God? *I renounce them.*

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?  
*I renounce them.*

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?  
*I renounce them.*

### 5. The congregation joins in the words of the Apostles' Creed.

People of God, do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

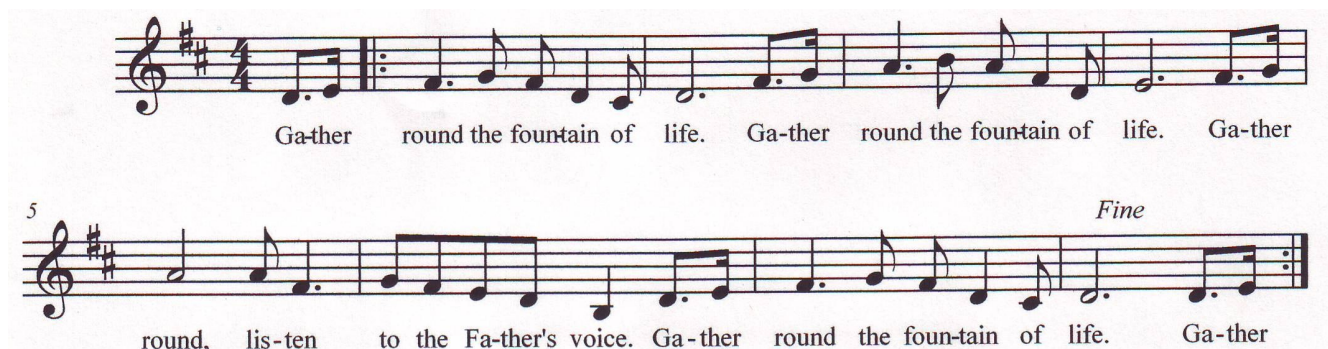
**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

7. The pastors, parents and sponsors gather at the font. Water is used because it is symbol of life. In the waters of baptism we are washed free from sin and begin new life with God. Children of the church are invited to gather at the baptismal font as the congregation sings "Gather Round the Fountain of Life." (11 am only)



What follows is a prayer over the water, lifting up the ways in which water has played a dramatic role in the life of faith:

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you. *continued ...*

Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

The actual baptism follows as the pastor takes the child into his/her arms and pours water over the child's head, saying:

(Child's name), I baptize you in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your daughters and sons new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life. Sustain this child with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.  
**Amen.**

8. The pastor uses oil to make the sign of the cross on the child's forehead, a symbol that he is sealed in relationship with Christ.

(Child's name), child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. **Amen.**



9. The pastor presents a lighted baptismal candle to a parent, representing the light of Christ.

Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.



10. The congregation welcomes the child into the family of God.

**We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the body of Christ, child of the same heavenly Father, and a worker with us in the kingdom of God.**

11. As the child is presented to the congregation, all join in singing "Jesus Loves Me!"

Jesus loves me! this I know, for the Bible tells me so;  
little ones to him belong, they are weak, but he is strong.

*Refrain: Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me,  
yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.*

Jesus loves me! he who died, heaven's gates to open wide;  
he will wash away my sin, let his little child come in. *Refrain*

12. All return to their seats.

# The Next Step

When children are baptized, their parents and sponsors are encouraged to nurture them in the Christian faith until they are old enough to follow Jesus on their own.

Look again at the charge to the parents:

*To the parents:* As you bring your child to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities: to live with him/her among God's faithful people, bring him/her to the word of God and the holy supper, teach him/her the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in his/her hands the holy scriptures, and nurture him/her in faith and prayer, so that him/her may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.

As you review these charges, notice the ways in which you are encouraged to nurture your child's faith:

- \* Pray for them.
- \* By the way you live, show them what it is like to be a Christian.
- \* Read them stories from the Bible.
- \* Take them to church.

Which of these will be easy for you?

Which will be more challenging?

Is there someone in your life who will hold you accountable to these promises?

To help you live into your baptismal promises, we offer Milestones for your children ages 3 to fifth grade to help them connect faith and life. When your child is old enough — normally around seventh or eighth grade — he/she will have the opportunity to be confirmed. In confirmation, your child will accept the promises you made for him at his baptism and make a public witness of faith in Jesus Christ.

Blessings in your journey!