

Baptism and Your Child

An explanation to parents about our beliefs
and the practice of baptizing children
at _____

by



*Then Jesus...said, "All authority in heaven and on earth
has been given to me. Therefore go 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 I have commanded you."*

Matthew 28:18-20

Dear parents,

Thank you for sending your child to _____!
It is the privilege of our staff and myself to love, care for, and help in the total development of your children! We are honored that you place your trust in us to help them grow as God's children, for their joy and well-being.

Our mission is based on Jesus' command:

*"...go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Matthew 28:19*

Jesus also said,

"Let the little children come to Me." Matthew 19:14

Jesus wants little children to believe in Him and know Him as their personal Savior and Friend, and to be in His family and have eternal life in heaven. At our church and preschool, we believe that one of the ways God saves, forgives, and blesses children is through baptism. At _____, we baptize infants and children as Jesus commanded and as Christians have done for many centuries.

This booklet is intended primarily for those who have not yet had their child(ren) baptized. *If you have already had your child(ren) baptized, please keep this booklet to help your child understand the importance of God's actions and promises to him/her through baptism, which will strengthen their faith in and love for God, and nurture their lifelong relationship with Jesus and God their Father.*

For you parents who have not had your child(ren) baptized, please read the booklet to be better informed about this wonderful gift God gives for the spiritual well-being of your child(ren).

You are receiving this baptism booklet because it is our understanding, from the registration form you completed, that your child has not been baptized. If this is incorrect, please accept my apologies for the misunderstanding. Feel free to either keep the booklet as a resource to help your child understand baptism better, or give to another parent who may benefit from reading it. If you would like additional copies, please let me know.

If you would like further information or be contacted, please complete and return the **Baptism Information Request Form**. Please feel free to talk with our director, _____, or myself, at your convenience.

As pastor, I am happy to assist you in planning the baptism(s) and offer suggestions. I am available _____.

There is no pastoral or church fee for baptisms at _____. A free-will donation to the church is optional.

If you want to send an email, my address is:

God's blessings!

At _____,
we believe that God loves us and all His children, and only wants what is best for us. We strive to communicate to everyone what God says about Himself and His promises.

“Show and Tell” is a student-participation method teachers use in classes, involving the students in helping other classmates learn what they themselves have learned.

In several ways, God “tells and shows.”

God **tells** us, “I am with you.”

God **shows** us He is with us by **sending Jesus**.

A “**visual**”: the manger in which the baby Jesus was placed after being born

God **tells** us, “I love you and forgive you.”

God **shows** us this by **Jesus’ death on the cross**.

The “**visual**”: the cross on which Jesus died

God **tells** us, “I conquer death for you.”

God **shows** us this by **Jesus’ resurrection from the dead**.

The “**visual**”: the empty tomb from which Jesus rose

God **tells** us, “I give you life in heaven, forever!”

“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Jesus **tells** us:

*“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”
Mark 16:16*

God **shows** us in baptism what He does through the promises in His Word: His action to save, forgive sins and give new life to a person.

The “**visual**”: water baptism

Notice in all these ways of “telling and showing,” it is God who is performing His actions for us. Just as none of us “birthed” ourselves physically, none of us can “birth” ourselves spiritually. Only God can do that. Jesus said,

*“no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is **born of water and the Spirit.**” John 3:5*

Only God can forgive sins, and the Bible tells us that God forgives sins through baptism:

*“be baptized every one of you... for the **forgiveness of your sins**” Acts 2:38*

Should I have my child baptized?

In making this decision,

1. Learn all you can about baptism. Study the Bible verses and listen to God “speaking” to you. Evaluate your personal beliefs and why you believe what you do. If you have questions I would be happy to talk with you about baptism.

2. Prayerfully think about what is best for your child and what Jesus would want you to do. Our belief is that Jesus wants children to be:

- baptized (including them in “*all nations*” *Matthew 28:19*)
- saved, born again, receive forgiveness, and have the Holy Spirit (*Mark 16:16, John 3:5, Acts 2:38-39*)
- in God’s family

*Jesus said, “Let the **little children** come to me...for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mark 10:14*

*“...be baptized, every one of you... The promise is for you and **your children** and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38-39*

There’s a story of a pastor who personally opposed infant baptism until, through the encouragement of his wife, he studied the Bible and Lutheran teaching more carefully. After the birth of their daughter (their first child) he consented to have her baptized as an infant. What made the difference for him? My thought is that he decided to support what was best for his own daughter by allowing God to fulfill His promises for her through baptism!

Would it be harmful to wait?

Not necessarily, providing you (as parents) are teaching your child about Jesus and reinforcing his/her faith (which is most important to our preschool teachers).

We teach that children can be saved without baptism (by believing in Jesus as their Savior and God's promises). Some parents prefer to have their children baptized later after they have been taught about Jesus and better understand the Bible and their faith.

Many parents, however, simply do not fully understand all the benefits of baptism for their children or procrastinate in spiritual matters.

Unless you have a very good reason, why wait?

Christian parents living in the first centuries had their children baptized, a commonly accepted practice never questioned or opposed until the 16th century!

Consider the spiritual benefits of baptism:

1. God saves, forgives, and gives new life and His Spirit (to protect, teach, and lead us).
2. God gives assurances of His love and blessings which strengthen faith.

Having your child baptized now would help his/her faith development and be a cause for celebration!

Why not allow your child to have these benefits now or as soon as possible?

Why do we get baptized if we don't need it to be saved?

Apparently God thinks we do need baptism. For those youth and adults who have believed the Gospel, baptism is needed as confirmation to us outwardly what God is doing inwardly (saving us, forgiving us, giving us faith and new life) and as testimony of all He promises in His Word. Baptism visually shows us through physical means that a spiritual reality has occurred. Our human nature is prone to questions and doubts about our “conversion experience” and faith (“Do I really believe? Am I really saved?”).

Feelings and beliefs based on personal experiences are insufficient and may even be dangerous because they may lead us to put faith in ourselves and not in God or His Word. God knows this and gave baptism as a means of His unconditional love (grace) so that our salvation is certain!

Our relationship with God and our salvation is ultimately a matter of faith. Baptism reinforces and strengthens faith and God knows we need all the help we can get!

For young children, baptism is the primary means of God’s grace through which God saves, forgives, creates faith and new life for a person who is not able to rationally understand the content of the Gospel, but who has the capacity for faith. God’s promises apply to infants and children, too. Through baptism God “plants a seed” of faith in children’s hearts and He wants that faith to grow so each child will be a lifelong believer and disciple of Jesus.

But can children really believe?

Yes! Bible verses to support this are:

*For you have been my hope, O LORD,
From birth I have relied on you; Psalm 71:5-6*

*[Jesus said,] “little children...believe in Me.”
Matt 18:2-6*

What happens at a baptism?

Participants position themselves (seated or standing)

- pastor stands near baptism bowl
- person being baptized stands or is held by an adult to the pastor's left
- others gather around

Note: Parents stand together, and godparents stand together. Children are welcome to stand with parents.

Baptism Ceremony Order (may be modified upon request)

1. Invocation and/or Opening Prayer
2. Bible Reading(s) with explanation of baptism
3. (optional) Sign of the cross
4. Blessing (as Jesus did; Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15 may be read)
5. Questions addressed to parents and godparents:
 - to testify of faith in the Triune God
 - to fulfill spiritual roles and responsibilities for child's spiritual guidance

Pastor hands a lighted baptism candle in a stand to one of the godparents.

6. Baptism
(child's head held face up over the center of the water)
7. Prayer
8. Blessing
9. Presentation of certificate

Optional

Bible Reading by a family member (included with #4 above)

What about godparents (selected by parents)?

The Role and Responsibilities of a Godparent

godparent: “a person who sponsors a child at baptism, assuming responsibility for the child’s religious guidance up to confirmation.” (Webster)

This means that an individual makes a personal and public commitment and promise to be a child’s godparent, and by that commitment and promise, intends to fulfill the responsibilities for the benefit of the sponsored child.

To be a godparent or sponsor is to:

- support the parents in order for them to fulfill God’s will in parenting their child
- care for, teach, and encourage the child
- pray for the spiritual well-being of the child
- teach the beliefs and practices of the Christian faith if the parents are unable to do so

Expectations for a Godparent

In the Lutheran Church, godparents or sponsors are also asked to publicly profess the Christian faith into which the child is being baptized and, thereby, agree with the church’s teaching about baptism for infants and children based on the Bible, God’s Word. A summary of our teaching about Baptism is available by asking the pastor.

It is not necessary for a godparent to be a member of a Lutheran church. It is required that a godparent be a professing Christian and have personal faith in God the Father, believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, and believe in the Holy Spirit as the 3rd person of the Trinity.

Note: If a godparent is unable to be present at the baptism, a proxy individual or couple may promise to fulfill the sponsorship responsibilities and profess Christian faith on behalf of the godparent(s). It is advised that parents communicate their desires and the church’s teaching about the stated responsibilities to the absent godparent(s).

If we want our child(ren) baptized, what do we do next?

1. Decide if you want a public or private service.

A public baptism is held in a church worship service.

At _____, we have _____ services:

A private baptism may be held in the church

_____, or at a home.

2. Schedule the date, time & location by consulting with the pastor.

3. Select and notify godparents or sponsors.

The pastor may help if needed.

4. Complete a brief form for a baptism certificate and for church records.

A baptism request form is available by calling the church.