

Children's Ministry

Re-Defined

A BAPTISM GUIDE FOR PASTORS



Provided by the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Children's Ministry Re-Defined Team



As you bring your children to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities: ...to live with them among God's faithful people, ..bring them to the word of God and the holy supper, teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, ..place in their hands the holy scriptures,

so that your children 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.

ELW, page 228

Baptism—that holy and mysterious event when an infant, child, teen or adult becomes a child of God in a special way. As a pastor, you have the privilege of accompanying a family during this special time of planning and preparation. This guide is written for you, the pastor, to encourage you in this vital task of ministry with families and to share ideas of what other congregations in our synod are doing to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Baptism with those in their midst. While the responsibilities you carry as the spiritual leader of your congregation are many, we hope that you will cherish this special time with families as an opportunity to begin, or strengthen, your ministry with that particular family, and as an opportunity to teach parents about their critical role as the primary nurturers of their child's faith life.

BEFORE BAPTISM

When a family is preparing to have a child baptized, it is important to help them understand what baptism is and why getting baptized is important. (This guide is not intended to be a guide to the theology of baptism—we trust you received that information in seminary!)

Something that means a lot to families is having their pastor meet with them prior to the baptism to not only go through the details of the service, but also to give them an understanding of the role that baptism plays in one's faith journey, and some practical ideas about how they as parents can begin to nurture their baby's (or child's) faith life.

Some discussion topics you may want to cover at a pre-baptism meeting include:

- What baptism is and why we baptize, including baptism-related scripture texts (Rom. 6:1-4, Col. 2:12, Gal. 3:27, 1 Pet. 3:21, Eph. 4:5-6-1 Cor. 12:13 are some ideas) to underscore that baptism is God's action, not ours!
- A discussion of the parent's role in faith formation—parents are **the most important**

influences, for better or worse, on their child's faith development! (See our companion Parent's Baptismal Guide also.) Give them a list of resources (see p. 4), or even better, gift them with a book or other resource that will help them with this amazing task of nurturing faith!

- Invite the baptismal sponsors to the meeting and talk about the role of sponsoring. Read through the promises in the ELW (or whatever order of service you use) so that the parents AND sponsors clearly understand their roles in nurturing this child's faith life.
- Go through the details of the service—let the participants know when they are to go to the baptismal font, what will happen, and who does what. Be sure to mention any traditions your congregation has or expectations you may have of who may (or may not) come to the baptismal area during the baptism.

DURING AND AFTER BAPTISM

Baptism is an exciting time not only for the child and family, but also for the congregation! To be a witness to this holy act is truly a blessing and a privilege, and also a responsibility. During the baptismal liturgy, the congregation promises to “support (name/s) and pray for *them* in *their* new life in Christ”. Here are some thoughts for helping your congregation understand the importance of their role, and ways to help them feel involved in the service:



- Invite the children in the congregation to come to the baptismal area for the baptism, so they can see what is happening.
- Bring the newly baptized into the midst of the congregation, as a symbol of the Christian community that surrounds them.
- Provide copies of *A Baptism Guide for Congregations* (one-page version) to every

worshiper with your bulletin on a Sunday when there is a baptism.

- Keep copies of *A Baptism Guide for Congregations* (brochure version) on hand in your literature racks.
- Invite congregation members who are talented at woodworking to make Faith Chests for children who will be baptized. See <http://www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org/resources/faithchest.asp> for more information on Faith Chests.

The time following a baptism can be a wonderful window for engaging families in your congregation’s ministry, particularly if they are not already active in the life of the congregation. The weeks and months following a baptism are natural openings to invite families into the discipleship or education opportunities your church offers, as well as continuing to encourage them in nurturing their child’s faith at home.



Merciful and most high God, creator and giver of life, you have called all people from darkness into light, from error into truth, from death into life. Grant grace to (name/s) and bless them.

Raise them by your Spirit.
Revive them by your word. Form them by your hand. Bring them to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessings, that with all your people they may bear witness to your grace and praise you forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

BAPTISMAL PRACTICES IN OUR SYNOD

The Children’s Ministry Re-Defined team asked congregations to tell us what they do to highlight the importance of baptism and how they make the baptism service special for the family and the one being baptized. Here are some stories of practices happening in our synod:

- Pastor David Roschke at Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church (Houston, TX) meets with the parents AND baptismal sponsors to explain the meaning of baptism, talk about the roles of each person in the child’s faith life, as well as go through the details of the baptismal liturgy.
- At St. John Lutheran Church (Cat Spring, TX), the choir sings a stanza of “Borning Cry” to set the tone for the sacred moment. After the baptism, the pastor processes down the aisle with the newly baptized and reminds the congregation of the responsibility it has taken to raise that person in the faith of Jesus Christ. (*Note: other congregations also use one or more stanzas of “Borning Cry” at some point*

during the baptism.)

- The children of St. John Lutheran Church (Bellville, TX) make special keepsakes such as crosses and baptismal shells that are placed inside the Faith Chest that a child receives at baptism. Also included in the chest, as gifts from the congregation, are an age-appropriate Bible, candle, and a few other items.
- Pastor Chris Markert at Celebration Church (Cypress, TX) wrote a different version of a baptismal liturgy. Find it on the insert included.
- St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church (Brenham, TX) provides a series of small faith-forming gifts (CDs and books, see resources section), beginning with baptism and continuing on the child’s first birthday, first baptism anniversary, second birthday and baptism anniversary, and third birthday.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

TO RECOMMEND FOR PARENTS

- Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children* by Elizabeth F. Caldwell
- The Surprising Power of Family Meals* by Miriam Weinstein
- Parenting With Purpose: Nurturing Faith and Life from Birth Through Age Six* by Oddbjorn Evenshaug, Dag Hallen and Roland Martinson
- Right From the Start: A Parent's Guide to the Young Child's Faith Development* by Shirley K. Morgenthaler
- Blest Be the Pie That Binds* by Dick Hardell
- Parents & Grandparents as Spiritual Guides* by Betty Shannon Cloyd
- A Prayerbook for Husbands and Wives* by Ruthanne and Walter Wangerin, Jr.

TO RECOMMEND FOR BAPTISMAL SPONSORS

- The Godparent Book: Ideas and Activities for Godparents and Their Godchildren* by Elaine Ramshaw
- A Word to My Sponsor: Celebrating the Life of Your Godchild* by Richard and Hazel Bimler
- We Do! A Guide for Godparents* (part of the "Splash!" line of baptism resources from Augsburg Fortress)

TO GIVE AS GIFTS FROM THE CONGREGATION

Please visit www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org and view their *FaithLife in the Home Resource and Gift Guide* for a comprehensive selection of excellent books and resources, grouped by age level. The Youth & Family Institute pores through the myriad of books and resources on the market to compile a list of "the best of the best" from many sources and publishers.

GIFTS

FROM THE CONGREGATION TO THE FAMILY

Faith or Baptismal Chest: These can either be purchased or someone from the congregation can build them. Some churches get name plates for the chests as well. Visit <http://www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org/resources/faithchest.asp> for more information.

Splash! line of baptism resources from

Augsburg Fortress:

- **Splash! Kit:** This is a monthly newsletter for birth through 36 months. A wonderful way for your congregation to connect with families each month!
- *Wonderfully Made! A Keepsake Book of Faith Moments*
- **Splash! Music:** Includes a different CD for ages 0-12 months, 13-24 months and 25-36 months. Each CD is sold separately.
- **Splash! Greeting Card Set:** Helps congregations acknowledge birthdays and baptismal anniversaries for the first three years of a child's life.

Candle and cloth used during the baptism

Baptismal certificate

And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

1 Peter 3:21

For in the one spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13

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

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 3:27



AN ALTERNATE BAPTISMAL LITURGY

Pastor Chris Markert, who serves Celebration Church in Cypress, TX, wrote an alternate baptismal liturgy and has given permission for us to share it here:

Friends, we gather at the baptismal font, to baptize *name/s*, and to surround *her/him* and *her/his* family with our love and prayers. Baptism is a beginning. It's a gift from our loving God to his children, who need all the help we can get in this journey in life.

Parents' names, do you desire the sacrament of Holy Baptism for your child? If so, answer, "we do". **We do.**

In baptism, God is the one who makes a promise. God's Word reminds us, "*See the Father's love for us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*"

But in baptism, we also make promises. As parents, you show your promise to raise *child's name* as a Jesus-follower. As *she/he* grows up, you promise to teach *her/him* the stories of our faith as found in our holy scriptures, and teach *her/him* the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. You promise to bring *her/him* to the house of God for worship and praise, and you promise to teach *her/him* to yearn in all things to be a compassionate and just seeker of peace. *Parents name*, if this is your intention, answer "It is, and we ask God to help us." **It is, and we ask God to help us.**

Sponsors' names, you are *child's name* godparents. What an amazing privilege and a sacred responsibility. By being *child's name* godparents, you promise to surround *her/him* with your prayers; to assist *her/his* parents in raising *her/him* as a follower of Jesus; to share your faith with *child's name*, and to let *child's name* share *her/his* faith with you. *Sponsors names*, if this is your intention answer, "It is, and we ask God to help us." **It is, and we ask God to help us.**

And people of God gathered here this morning, we have the honor of speaking on behalf of the entire Body of Christ. In baptism, *child's name* becomes our *sister/brother*. *She/he* is being consecrated for *her/his* ministry in the priesthood we all share as followers of Christ. Do you, people of God, promise to surround *child's name* and *her/him* family with your love and

prayers? As *child's name* grows, will you assist and support *her/him* in finding *her/him* calling in life, and in all things welcome *her/him* as one of your own? If this is your intention, then people of God answer, "It is, and we ask God to help us." **It is, and we ask God to help us.**

On behalf of *child's name*, we confess our faith in God, the faith in which we baptize. As Christians, we believe in God the Father who loves, creates, and sustains all living things. We believe in Jesus Christ, who came to bring forgiveness of sins and new life to all people. We believe in the Holy Spirit who gives us our identity as children of God. Do you believe in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? If yes, then let us all answer, "*We so believe!*" **We so believe!**

BAPTISM AND SEALING

Let us pray: We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give us new birth. Sustain *child's name* 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 reverence of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence. Bless *parents names* and all parents and guardians. Let them ever rejoice in the gift you have given them, and make them teachers and examples of the faith, in Jesus' name. Amen.

CANDLELIGHTING

WELCOME

We welcome you, child of God, into the mission we all share. Help us to share with the world the amazing goodness of the Lord!

