

Children's Ministry

Re-Defined

A BAPTISM GUIDE FOR SPONSORS



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 baptismal sponsor, you have the unique privilege of being a witness to this sacred act and, more importantly, of accompanying this child on a lifelong journey of faith. This guide is written for you, the baptismal sponsor, to prepare both spiritually and logistically for this holy moment in a special child's life.

What is baptism? Lutheran churches usually baptize infants because we believe baptism is a gift of grace from God, not something we earn or choose. So we baptize those who cannot choose for themselves, infants, as well as people of all ages.

BEFORE BAPTISM

Congratulations! You have been invited to be a baptismal sponsor for someone who is probably very special to you. Although it is likely you have already agreed to be the baptismal sponsor, you may want to give some thought to this question: **should** I be a baptismal sponsor? This is something you really need to think and pray about. You will be the only one who will know whether you can fulfill the promises you make at baptism.

Here are some questions to consider:

- Can I keep this child and family in my prayers always?
- Can I be here for this child any time they need?
- Can I make sure to support this child and family emotionally and spiritually?
- Can I continue to grow in my own faith and make that a priority in my life?

You may also be wondering about the roles of a baptismal sponsor. A baptismal sponsor makes promises to be there for this child, to remember his/her baptismal day, to help support the parents in raising the child, and pray for the child and his/her family. Being a baptismal sponsor is big responsibility so you want to make sure you can fulfill the promises you will make to the child and to the family.

The last thing you need to do to prepare for the baptism is to get a small gift for the child, so that when he/she grows up, this token can be a reminder of their baptism and of your special relationship. (See p. 4 for suggestions.) Also, pray for you, the child, and the family as they prepare for this special day.

DURING THE SERVICE



Each church has different ways and traditions of doing baptisms, so you have to find out what the church does through conversations with parents or the pastor. At most churches, the baptismal sponsors are asked to present the child for baptism:

I/We present name to this community of faith

As a Baptismal Sponsor you make promises to this child and family during the baptism. Here is what you promise:

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

Response: I do.

Then the minister will ask you and the parents:

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

Response: I renounce them.

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

Response: I renounce them.

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?

Response: I renounce them.

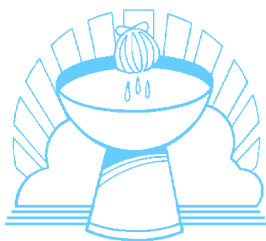
Each congregation's tradition about who holds the child during the baptism is different; check with your pastor on your church's practice. Many churches will also give a gift of some kind, including but not limited to the candle and cloth napkin used during the service and a baptismal certificate.

It is a very exciting day for the whole family and for you. Please help to make sure pictures are taken so that the child can remember the baptism later on. Also help the parents to take home the gifts from the church.

PROMISES MADE...NOW WHAT?

Now that you have made promises and your godchild has been sealed with the cross of Christ forever...now what? What are you supposed to do? While there are no "10 Commandments for Baptismal Sponsors", there are a few things that would be wonderful for you to do:

- Keep the child and the family in your prayers.
- Continue on your own faith journey by growing and strengthening your own faith and by sharing it with this child as she/he grows.
- Be a great



example to this child as to how to be a caring and loving adult.

- Remember the child's baptismal anniversary each year with a card or visit.
- Go out of your way to remind the child that you are his/her baptismal sponsor.

One of the easiest days for a child to remember is his or her birthday. As a baptismal sponsor you can not only remember their birthday, but it is even more important that you remember their baptism anniversary! Everyone else will remember their birthday, but you will be one of the few who will be remembering the day they got baptized.

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.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

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)

GIFT IDEAS

CHRISTIAN PARENTING

One way you may choose to support your godchild's parents is by purchasing a book for them that helps them with their role as primary faith nurturers. Here are some suggestions.

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

Wonderfully Made! A Keepsake Book of Faith Moments (from the Splash! line of baptism resources, augsburgfortress.org)

A Prayerbook for Husbands and Wives by Ruthanne and Walter Wangerin, Jr.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

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.

BIBLES

0-2 years: *Baby's First Bible* by Colin and Moira MacLean. Colorful pictures allow little ones to learn a handful of basic Bible stories.

0-3 years: *The Baby Bible Storybook* by Robin Currie. An interactive board book that includes actions to do with each story.

1-3 years: *My Child's First Bible* (Tyndale House Foundation). Colorful pictures and short, to-the-point stories along with a question at the end of each story facilitates easy discussion.

2-4 years: *My Goodnight Bible* by Susan Lingo. Great Bible with short, rhyming bible stories, prayer and questions to discuss.

2-6 years: *Little Boys Bible Storybook* or *Little Girls Bible Storybook* (both are subtitled "For Mothers and Sons/Daughters").

4-8 years: *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones.

MUSIC

Splash! Music: Includes a different CD for ages 0-12 months, 13-24 months and 25-36 months. Each CD is sold separately. From Augsburg Fortress (augsburgfortress.org)

100 Bible Stories, 100 Bible Songs by Stephen Elkins. Recommended for 1-3 years old. Kids love the songs and the stories—and it's great for bedtime!



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