

An Intergenerational Curriculum Based on Affirmation of Baptism

A Book of Faith/Life of Faith Resource

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Affirmation of Baptism service includes these promises:

“You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

- to live among God’s faithful people
- to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,
- to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and
- to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?”

Each person responds: “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.”

This six-session study takes as its point of departure the promises made in the Affirmation of Baptism Service. The sessions are:

1. *The Covenant God Made with You in Holy Baptism*
2. *To Live among God’s Faithful People, Hearing the Word of God and Sharing in the Lord’s Supper*
3. *To Proclaim the Good News of God in Christ through Word and Deed*
4. *To Serve All People, Following the Example of Jesus*
5. *To Strive for Justice and Peace in All the Earth*
6. *I Do, and I Ask God to Help and Guide Me*

The study is designed for intergenerational use but also may be used in other settings.

Each session begins with a brief overview as an aid to those leading the study. Three objectives are stated at the start of each session. Each session is divided into three sections.

Each section begins with a selection from the Bible, Martin Luther, or the Small Catechism for reflection and conversation. Read these selections aloud. It may be useful to read the selections more than once, having different members of the group do the successive readings.

Brief explanatory notes to assist in understanding the particular reading follow each selection. The leader may choose to convey this information as best fits the audience and situation.

The heart of this study involves the questions based on the reading selections designated **For Conversation**. Please invite each member of the group to say something about each question. It is also possible for a group member not to address a particular question by saying, “Pass.”

Each session includes a suggested hymn from Evangelical Lutheran Worship that could be sung by the group.

Leaders are encouraged to arrange for prayer at the beginning and end of each session.

SESSION ONE:

The Covenant God Made with You in Holy Baptism

Leader's Guide

The first session grounds every ministry in daily life in the gospel promises God made to you in Jesus Christ at your baptism. The fact of your baptism gives you your core identity throughout life, whether in times of joy or times of sorrow and all the other times in between. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God in Jesus Christ freely grants you liberating gifts: the forgiveness of sin, deliverance from all evil, and eternal life. The gospel of Jesus Christ that became personal *for you* at your baptism not only sets you free *from sin*, death, and the power of the devil but sets you free *for* serving the neighbors God gives you in every sphere of influence in your daily life. It is vitally important that every baptized person enter into a discernment process regarding the significance of their ministries in daily life, just as much as it is necessary for those discerning a possible call to pastoral ministry. Congregations will become truly missional when they become adept at accompanying people in this discernment process and educating them specifically for their ministries in daily life.

Objectives

- To encourage you to view your core identity through the eyes of baptism
- To claim the gifts given to you by Christ at baptism
- To discern together in community the particular gifts for ministry of each participant in response to Christian freedom

Hymn: "We Are Baptized in Christ Jesus" ELW #451

1. Baptized into Christ Jesus: Your Core Identity

Isaiah 43:1 says: "I have called you by name, you are mine."

- When you were born you were given a name.
- According to Christian faith, the name you were given at your baptism, child of God, is your most important name.
- At baptism you were given another name: You are a child of God! God created you and Jesus loves you!

For Conversation

1. Share with others your full name. What do you know about your given name?
2. What does your name mean in its original language(s)? If you don't know, do a quick search online.
3. Do you have any nicknames?
4. What do you like or dislike about nicknames?
5. What difference do the names we are called make for how we understand ourselves?
6. How does it make you feel when you hear that in baptism you were given the name child of God, a name that is more important than any other name by which you are called?
7. What makes it hard for you to believe the promise given to you in baptism?
8. How can we help each other to trust that our baptismal name, child of God, is our most important name?

2. Gifts for Life: Forgiveness of Sins, Deliverance from Evil, and Eternal Life

Martin Luther asks in the Small Catechism: “What gifts or benefits does baptism grant?” The answer: “It brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare.”

For Conversation

1. What does it mean that God forgives you, not only the day when you were baptized but on because of your baptism again today?
2. What does it mean that God promises to help you in times of struggle and deliver you from evil?
3. What does it mean that God promises to give you eternal life?
4. What makes it hard for you to believe these promises?
5. How can we help each other to trust that the promises God made to you at baptism are still true today?

3. Freedom From and Freedom For: Discerning Your Call to Ministry

Luther asks in the Small Catechism: “What is the significance of such baptism with water?” The answer: “It signifies that the old person in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily sorrow for sin and through repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

- The good news of Jesus Christ is the message that you are a beloved child of God as your core identity.
- God in Jesus Christ has given you a new and everlasting name, child of God.
- God in Jesus Christ gives you through your baptism forgiveness, deliverance from evil and eternal life.
- You are called to live every day in the covenant God made with you at baptism, trusting God’s promises and living according your baptismal covenant:
“to live among God’s faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people,
following the example of Jesus, and
to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”
- Covenant means “an agreement, pledge or promise.”
- The good news means freedom *from* everything that prevents you from being the beloved child that God created you to be.
- The good news means freedom *for* helping other people.
- Ministry means serving others as our neighbors.

For Conversation

1. What are some of the things that keep you from being the beloved child that God created you to be?
2. What prevents you from helping other people?
3. What difference does the good news make for how you understand yourself?
4. What difference does the good news make for how you treat other people?
5. What gifts has God given you to help others?
6. What gifts do others see that you have?
7. How can we help each other recognize our gifts and discern how to use them to help others?

SESSION TWO:

To Live among God's Faithful People, Hearing the Word of God and Sharing in the Lord's Supper

Leader's Guide

The second session focuses on how through your baptism you were joined to the body of Christ. Each of us has been joined in baptism as a member of the body of Christ; each person contributes to its diversity and wholeness. We need one another in the church for mutual encouragement and for mutual accountability in living out our baptismal vocations. God in Christ grants to each member of this body particular gifts to be shared for the common good. These gifts are not to be confined to the things we do in service through our congregation, although these too are valued forms of service. Rather the main arenas where we share our spiritual gifts with others are in serving the neighbors God gives us in our family, workplace, school, community and world. This is what Martin Luther meant by the universal priesthood of all believers. When you gather for worship around word and sacrament in your congregation, God in Christ is forming and equipping you by your participation in the distinctive practices of worship for serving your neighbors in daily life.

Objectives

- To recognize how you are called to ministry as a member of the body of Christ
- To understand that every baptized person is a minister in daily life: You are a minister
- To connect what you do at worship with how you live your life

Hymn: "When in Our Music God Is Glorified" ELW #850, 851

1. Baptized into the Body of Christ: Gifted and Called to Ministry

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:27: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

- When you were baptized, you were given the name, child of God, your most important name.
- When you were baptized, you were given by Christ the gifts of forgiveness, deliverance from evil, and eternal life.
- When you were baptized, you also became a member of the church as the body of Christ.
- All gifts given to you as a member of the body of Christ are for the common good.
- Discernment means recognizing your gifts and deciding how you can use your gifts to help others.

For Conversation

1. What does it mean that you are a member of the body of Christ?
2. What difference does it make that together we are all members of the body of Christ?
3. What gifts do you see being shared by members of the body of Christ for the common good?
4. What gifts do you have to share as a member of the body of Christ for the common good?
5. What gifts do others discern you have to share as a member of the body of Christ for the common good?

Paul writes in Romans 12:4-8: “For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”

- All gifts of the members of the body of Christ come from the Holy Spirit.
- Each of us has different gifts to share as members of the body of Christ.
- Ministry comes from the New Testament word “diakonia” and means service.
- When we serve other people, we are doing ministry.
- You are a minister!

For Conversation

1. How can we thank the Holy Spirit for all the gifts given to the members of the body of Christ?
2. What are some of the ways you have seen members of the body of Christ serving others? List as many examples as you can.
3. What makes it hard for you to think of yourself as a minister?
4. How can we help one another to see ourselves as ministers?

2. The Universal Priesthood: Ministry in Daily Life

Luther writes: “In fact, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter in 1 Peter 2 says, ‘You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom.’”

- Luther affirmed the equal status of all baptized people before God in Christ.
- Luther affirmed the equal value of all forms of ministry by the baptized.

For Conversation

1. How do you look at yourself differently if your baptism made you a priest?
2. What does it mean that every baptized person has equal status before God in Christ?
3. What difference does it make that all forms of ministry by the baptized have equal value?
4. The ministry of the baptized is shared in the arenas of daily life.
5. We can identify five main arenas of daily life: family, workplace, school, local community and world.
6. You live as a minister or priest in these arenas of daily life.

For Conversation

1. In which of these five arenas of daily life are you most active?
2. How are you a minister to the neighbors in your family?
3. How are you a minister to the neighbors in your workplace or school?
4. How are you a minister to the neighbors in your community?
5. How are you a minister to the neighbors in your world?
6. How can your congregation support and encourage you in your ministry in daily life?

3. Worship as Formation for the Christian Life

The Third Commandment is: “Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.”

Luther writes in the Small Catechism: “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching of God’s Word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it.”

- This commandment means we are to respect, honor and love God by our worship.
- Worship is the gathering of God’s people to receive forgiveness, sing praises to God, hear God’s word, pray to God, receive Holy Communion, and be sent with God’s blessing.
- At worship, God in Christ forms and equips you for ministry in daily life.
- Each part of the worship service teaches you ways to live out your ministry in daily life. For example, when you sing songs, you learn to praise God each day of your life. When you listen to the readings and the sermon, you make connections between the Bible and your daily life. When you pass the peace, you learn to share Christ’s peace with others every day. When you pray the prayers, you hear a call from God to serve others. When you receive communion, Jesus welcomes you and you learn how to welcome others.
- At the end of worship, you are sent to “go and serve the Lord.”

For Conversation

1. What do you love the most about worshipping God?
2. What are some ways you see God forming and equipping you at worship for ministry in daily life?
3. What makes it hard for you to see the connections between worship and ministry in daily life?
4. How can we better make connections between worship and ministry in daily life?

SESSION THREE:

To Proclaim the Good News of God in Christ through Word and Deed

Leader's Guide

The third session highlights the Great Commission from the Gospel of Matthew: “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 I have commanded you” (28:19-20). Who are the ones commissioned to share the promises of Jesus with other people today? Such ministry of speaking the Christian faith to others is not confined to those who serve as pastors or professional church staff. Instead Jesus commissions each of you at your baptism as those who are “to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.” This session places particular emphasis on building capacity among all the baptized members of the church to listen to other people with an ear to the God questions that are ever present as they search for meaning and direction in their lives and to learn how to speak the Christian faith to others with competence and clarity, ready to give account “for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). We increase our ability for evangelizing by the practice of speaking the faith to others in small groups, mentoring relationships and caring conversations.

Objectives

- To hear the Great Commission as Jesus' invitation to you
- To recognize both what you say and what you do as ministry in daily life
- To consider how you can improve your ability to speak your faith to others

Hymn: “I Love to Tell the Story” ELW #661

1. Jesus and the Great Commission

Jesus says to his followers in Matthew 28:19-20: “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.”

- This is the Great Commission that Jesus shared with his followers.
- A disciple is someone who follows Jesus.
- A commission is something another person tells you to do for them.
- Jesus promises to be with you always as you follow the Great Commission.

For Conversation

1. What do you hear Jesus asking his disciples to do for him in the Great Commission?
2. What do you hear Jesus asking you to do for him in the Great Commission?
3. What difference does it make that Jesus promises to be with you in following the Great Commission?
4. What makes it hard for you to follow the Great Commission?
5. How can we help each other follow the Great Commission?

2. Word and Deed: Speaking and Serving

Jesus says to his followers in Matthew 22:37-39: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

- This is the Great Commandment that Jesus shared with his followers.
- A commandment is something another person tells you to do for them.
- The Great Commandment is also at the heart of the Old Testament.
- The Great Commission and the Great Commandment teach us that both speaking and serving are ways we minister in daily life.

For Conversation

1. What does it mean to love God with your heart?
2. What does it mean to love God with your soul?
3. What does it mean to love God with your mind?
4. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?
5. What makes it hard for you to follow the Great Commandment?
6. How can we help each other follow the Great Commandment?

3. Capacity for Evangelizing: Speaking the Faith to Others

God’s word says in 1 Peter 3:15-16: “Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”

- In the New Testament, evangelizing involves sharing God’s promises with other people using words.
- Ministry in daily life sometimes involves using words to encourage others with the hope we have in Jesus Christ.
- In order to be ready to speak God’s promises to others, you first need to listen carefully to what they are saying to you.
- You are called to share God’s promises with others using words.

For Conversation

1. What are some of God’s promises that you need to hear from others?
2. Share a time when someone shared God’s promises with you using words.
3. What does it feel like to hear words of encouragement from others about God’s promises?
4. Why is it important to listen carefully to others before we speak about God’s promises?
5. What makes it hard for us to put God’s promises into words?
6. How can we help each other learn how to speak God’s promises to others?

SESSION FOUR:

To Serve All People, Following the Example of Jesus

Leader's Guide

The fourth session reminds us again of the Great Commandment of Jesus: that you are to love God with all your heart, soul and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus not only drew upon this central teaching from the Hebrew Bible at the heart of his message he enacted the love commandment by washing the feet of his disciples as a sign that they were to share with others (John 13:14-15). Just as Jesus lovingly washes the feet of his disciples, we are to do likewise by serving others in our own spheres of influence in our daily lives. God gives us neighbors to serve in our homes, at work, at school, in our communities and around the world. What are the particular ways God is calling you to serve your neighbors in your daily life? The acts of kindness done for the sake of neighbors in the unfolding of an ordinary day are true Christian ministry, just like the things we do through our congregations. In fact, only when the baptized live out service to their neighbor in their daily spheres of influence do we live in accordance with the love commandment.

Objectives

- To discover how Jesus was a servant in giving us God's love by washing the feet of his followers and dying on the cross
- To explore how you can be a servant to others in your spheres of influence
- To consider how you can serve others in daily life

Hymn: "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love" ELW #708

1. Jesus and the Love Commandment

At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of his followers and then said to them: "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:12-15, 34-35).

- Washing the feet of others was the job of a servant in New Testament times.
- Jesus took the place of the servant by bending down and washing the feet of his followers.
- Jesus says we are to follow his example by washing the feet of one another.
- By this example Jesus shows us what it means to love others as ministers in daily life.

For Conversation

1. Why do you think Jesus acted as a servant to wash the feet of his followers?
2. What would you think and feel if Jesus washed your feet as one of his followers?
3. What does it mean for you to follow his example?
4. What makes it hard for you to love others as a minister in daily life?
5. How can we encourage one another to love others in our ministries in daily life?

2. Taking the Form of a Servant: Your Spheres of Influence

Paul writes in Philippians 2:5-8: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.”

- Paul reminds us that we are to have the same servant mind as Jesus Christ.
- Jesus Christ was humble and obedient as a servant when he died on the cross for us.
- When you were baptized, you were baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Jesus Christ served you by his death on the cross, and you are called to give thanks by serving others in all your spheres of influence.
- Your spheres of influence include every arena of daily life in which you can offer yourself in service to others.

For Conversation

1. How was Jesus a servant to others in his ministry in daily life? You might recall particular Bible stories about Jesus.
2. What is your response to the good news that Jesus died for you on the cross as a humble and obedient servant?
3. What are the main spheres of influence in your daily life?
4. How can you be a servant in your spheres of influence?
5. What makes it hard for you to be a servant in your spheres of influence?
6. How can we encourage one another to serve others in our spheres of influence?

3. Capacity for Serving: Sharing Christ's Love

Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10-18: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”

- God in Christ equips you for sharing Christ's love in all your spheres of influence and in all your arenas of daily life.

For Conversation

Making connections between the reading from Ephesians 6:10-18 and your own call to share Christ's love in daily life, have conversation about the following questions. Be as specific as you are able about the challenges you face.

1. How are you equipped for serving neighbors in your family?
2. How are you equipped for serving neighbors at school or work?
3. How are you equipped for serving neighbors in your community?
4. How are you equipped for serving neighbors in our world?

SESSION FIVE:

To Strive for Justice and Peace in All the Earth

Leader's Guide

The fifth session explores Christian responsibility for living out your baptismal vocation in service to neighbors by striving “for justice and peace in all the earth.” To strive is to act intentionally with purpose and determination. This means involvement both in acts of charity and the work of advocacy. The arts of congregation-based community organizing can be of great benefit in this striving: identifying and analyzing key social issues, appealing to the interest of others for addressing these issues, and mobilizing strategic action on the part of a community interested in social change. Community organizing leads to varied forms of advocacy on behalf of peace, justice, creation care and defending human rights. These are “the things that make for [shalom]” (Luke 19:42). Christians can receive action alerts regarding crucial legislation from the ELCA Advocacy Network or other advocacy organizations, such as Bread for the World. Thereby, we heed the words of the prophet Micah about doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God.

Objectives

- To explore what it means to strive for justice and peace in all the earth
- To understand how loving your neighbor requires doing justice and peace
- To introduce the role of advocacy in doing justice and peace

Hymn: “Light Dawns on a Weary World” ELW #726

1. What Does the Lord Require of Me? Doing Justice, Loving Kindness, and Walking Humbly

Micah the prophet declares in Micah 6:6, 8:

“With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
... He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?”

- The prophet Micah questioned why those who worshiped God did not serve their neighbors in daily life.
- True worship of God leads to doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God in daily life.

For Conversation

1. What connections do you see between worshiping God and serving your neighbors in daily life?
2. How have you seen Christians “doing justice” in daily life?
3. How have you seen Christians “loving kindness” in daily life?
4. How have you seen Christians “walking humbly” in daily life?
5. How can we encourage one another to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God?

2. Loving Our Neighbor by Doing Justice and Peace

Paul writes in Romans 12:9-18: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

- Justice means “to act or treat fairly” and “to appreciate properly.”
- Justice involves not only your personal behavior but how people are treated in society.
- Peace means “to be complete” and “to be made whole.”
- Peace involves life-giving relationships with God, others, and the creation that make us whole.
- Society means “how people are organized to live together in a large community.”
- Some of the goals for living together in society include having the basic necessities of life: enough to eat, clean water to drink, someplace to live, basic health care and education, peace, safety, and freedom to participate.
- Loving our neighbor includes not only individual actions but policies that protect the weak in society from being harmed by the strong.

For Conversation

1. How do the practices named by Paul in Romans 12:9-18 contribute to justice and peace in society?
2. What are some examples of injustice and violence in recent history?
3. What are some examples of justice and peace in recent history?
4. What can you do personally to promote justice and peace in society?
5. What can we do together to promote justice and peace in society?
6. What makes it hard for you to work for justice and peace in society?
7. How can we encourage one another to work for justice and peace in society?

3. Called to Advocacy

Proverbs 31:8-9 says: “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

- Advocacy means “the act of pleading for, supporting or recommending something to others.”
- Destitute means being “without the basic necessities of life.”
- Members of the body of Christ can participate in advocacy by contacting public officials to support policies and laws that are fair to all, including the poor and needy.
- Congregations can get involved in advocacy locally through [Congregation-Based Community Organizing](#).*
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America can assist its members in education about issues and involvement in [advocacy](#) about public policy.*

For Conversation

1. What are some examples of speaking out to defend the rights of the poor and needy in recent history?
2. What are some issues that need our advocacy in order to improve or change public policy?
3. Can you share an experience you have had of speaking out for those who cannot speak?
4. Can you share an experience you have had of speaking out for the rights of the destitute?
5. What can we do together to participate in advocacy of the rights of the poor and needy?
6. What makes it hard for you to participate in advocacy?
7. How can we encourage each other to participate in advocacy?

* If this study guide is printed, the links embedded above are as follows, respectively:

- [ELCA.org/en/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Congregation-based-Community-Organizing](https://www.elca.org/en/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Congregation-based-Community-Organizing)
- [ELCA.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy](https://www.elca.org/en/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy)

SESSION SIX:

I Do, and I Ask God to Help and Guide Me

Leader's Guide

The sixth session underscores the responsibilities of Christians to live in accordance with their baptismal covenant. A covenant is an agreement; In the case of baptism, it is a solemn agreement between God and the one who has been joined to the promises of Christ through this sacrament. God in Christ continues to bless us each new day with all the gifts promised to the baptized: forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Martin Luther, therefore, encouraged you to daily remember your baptism, for example, by making the sign of the cross on your brow. In gratitude for all God has done to secure our status before God in Christ Jesus, including the gift of eternal life, we are free *from* worry about how we are doing in our relationship with God and free *for* paying attention to the needs of the neighbors God gives us in this world: those who belong to your family, those with whom and for whom you perform daily work, those people and ideas you encounter in getting an education, those who live in your community, and those who are affected by our active engagement across the world. By participating in daily faith practices, we can be sustained in our weariness and have our joy restored for this ministry in daily life.

Objectives

- To affirm your baptismal covenant
- To claim the people in your arenas of daily life as your neighbors
- To ask God to help and guide you in living out your affirmation of baptism

Hymn: “Here I Am, Lord” ELW #574

1. ‘I Do’: Living in Your Baptismal Covenant

Luther writes about the work of the Holy Spirit in the Small Catechism: “I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day, the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.”

- When you affirm your baptism, you are asked: “Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:
to live among God’s faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and
to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”

Each person responds: “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.”

- We each need the power of the Holy Spirit every day to help us live according to our baptismal covenant.
- Covenant means “an agreement, pledge or promise.”

For Conversation

1. What does it mean for you to say, “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me”?
2. Why do you need the Holy Spirit to help you live according to your baptismal covenant?
3. Why is it important daily that the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins?
4. How does the Holy Spirit set you free for living according to your baptismal covenant?
5. What makes it hard for you to live according to your baptismal covenant?
6. How can we help each other live according to our baptismal covenant?

2. Who Is My Neighbor? Home, Work, School, Community and World

Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37: “Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus: ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

- Being a neighbor involves showing mercy to others in daily life.
- The priest and the Levite were religious leaders.
- A Samaritan was a stranger that you would not expect to stop and help.
- Mercy means “compassion, love or forgiveness shown to another person,” especially someone in need.

For Conversation

1. What does this parable teach you about loving your neighbor in daily life?
2. Why did the priest and Levite not stop and give help?
3. Who is your neighbor in your family?
4. Who is your neighbor at school or work?
5. Who is your neighbor in your community and world?
6. What makes it hard to be a neighbor to the people in your arenas of daily life?
7. How can we encourage one another to be a neighbor in our arenas of daily life?

3. 'I Ask God to Help and Guide Me': Centered in Faith Practices

Luther asks in the Small Catechism: "How can water do such great things?" The answer: "Clearly the water does not do it, but the word of God, which is with and alongside the water, and faith, which trusts this word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is plain water and not a baptism, but with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a grace-filled water of life and a 'bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit,' as St. Paul says to Titus in chapter 3, 'through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is sure.'"

- Grace is "God's undeserved love, compassion and mercy in Jesus Christ."
- An heir is "a person legally entitled to the property of another."
- You are an heir to Christ's gifts made to you in baptism by trusting God's word.
- Luther said: "Our faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing."
- Faith practices help you trust Christ's grace-filled promises made to you in baptism.
- Faith practices are ways to live out your faith as you grow in your discipleship.
- Faith practices include inviting, prayer, study, worship, giving, encouraging and serving.

For Conversation

1. As an heir to Christ's gifts in baptism, which of the gifts given to you in baptism is most important to you?
2. Which faith practices are most helpful to you in trusting Christ's grace-filled promises?
3. Which faith practices would you like to learn more about?
4. What makes it hard for you to follow faith practices in your daily life?
5. How can we encourage each other to follow faith practices in daily life?

To conclude this study, participate together in the Affirmation of Christian Vocation service on page 84 of Evangelical Lutheran Worship.

Leader: "Sisters and brothers, both your work and your rest are in God. Will you endeavor to pattern your life on the Lord Jesus Christ, in gratitude to God and in service to others, at morning and evening, at work and at play, all the days of your life?"

Response: "I will, and I ask God to help me."

Prayer: "Almighty God, by the power of the Spirit you have knit these your servants into the one body of your Son, Jesus Christ. Look with favor upon them in their commitment to serve in Christ's name. Give them courage, patience, and vision; and strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and service to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."