

BAPTISM Stepping Stones Teaching Notes

Getting Acquainted:

People Bingo Game (see sample) Parents and children move about room trying to complete the entire 12 squares as they recall details about their baptism. Each person signs their own and another's game board only once.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you the gift of this day and for bringing us safely here to learn about and celebrate our baptisms and the gifts we receive through this Sacrament. We thank you for the new name you gave each of us in Baptism as your child. Thank you for the Holy Spirit coming in to our lives. We pray for each of these children. Continue to guide them as they grow in faith. Bless these parents. Help them to know you, to live with your love, to teach your truth and to continue to tell the story of Jesus to these children. You have created us to have a relationship with you and know that you long for each of us to know you and love you. Remind us of the promises of Baptism. Your Holy Spirit is working powerfully in us to make us examples of faith. Bless this gift of time which we offer now to You and to these precious children. Amen.

Introductions & Sharing Baptism Mementos:

Each child introduces themselves and the adult with them as they share the Baptism memento they were asked to bring.

Teaching Notes: THE WHAT AND WHY OF BAPTISM

- + His affirmation! In baptism, we receive God's approval and we become a member of God's royal family
- + Listen as I read Mark 1:9-11. (Then review all the details in these 3 short verses about the baptism of Jesus.)
- + What announcement did God make at this baptism?
- + I'm going to ask the parents what they would affirm as special about their child, what is unique about them? (2-3 minutes for parents to look their child in the eye and affirm their child)
- + Lutheran Christians believe that our Christian life begins at baptism when we become members of the family of God. We are adopted into his family and have all of privileges and rights of God's children. We are heirs of his kingdom and of eternal life. We inherit all the good gifts God has for us.
- + Baptism is a sacrament. What is a sacrament?
 - 1) It is a gift of God's grace - a way of God letting us know that Jesus has been given to us and lives in us. What is grace? God's love for us completely undeserved on our part. Gifts of God's grace are belonging, forgiveness, faith and eternal life
 - 2) Commanded by Christ
 - 3) Uses an ordinary element. We can see, taste, feel, experience this gift through an ordinary physical element - something visible – water. What % of

our bodies are made up of water (60 %)? Can we survive without water?
No more than 3 days! Water sustains life!

✚ (Click through images of uses of water) So why use such an ordinary thing as water? Water is ordinary but it is very powerful stuff as we see in these stories! Is water still powerful? Has anyone ever been to Hoover Dam or some of the other huge dams in this country? Water has power!!

✚ Too much water can be scary!

✚ God made water a sign of the kingdom.

In Genesis 1, we read that in the beginning God's spirit moved over the waters and he created heaven and earth. Water is a must for all living things!

Any other water stories in the Bible? (Pause for answers, then provide a few not mentioned.) Noah - through the flood waters God condemned the wicked but saved Noah and his family. Moses - the Red Sea waters were parted as the final release from slavery into the promised land. Jonah, water to wine, several of Jesus' miracles involved water. Only Jesus had power over water.

✚ In baptism, God uses an ordinary thing like water to do an extraordinary thing to give us new life! **But it's important to remember that it's not just water alone that does these great things - It's the water along with the words that are spoken in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

✚ Ways to think about baptism:

✚ Do you have any special identification marks? Any birthmarks? Is it somewhere visible where we can see it? Is there anyone that has your exact birthmark? Baptism is God's birthmark on you. Where is it? What does it look like? Can we see it? Who can? God can!

✚ Do you know what a watermark is? (Have the children hold the baptism certificate on the linen paper up to the light and discover the watermark.) A watermark tells who created it and what is unique about it. So it is with baptism. God created us and we are made in His image. How does God's watermark get on you? What does it look like? Who can see it? How is it placed there?

✚ God's word comes together with the water to get the seeds of our faith started. Through the water and the word, God names us and claims us. A seed of faith is planted in our heart. Baptism is the means by which God's

spirit comes to us to grace our lives with forgiveness, acceptance and love. Baptism makes us new. In baptism, God takes each seed out of the package, gives it a kiss, names it and plants it in a special place to grow and be nurtured. God does the planting, but as the seeds are sown, God assigns the parents the task of being good gardeners. They have to nurture and water these seeds of faith. We wouldn't just plant a seed in a cup, set in down somewhere and forget about it and expect it to grow into a beautiful plant. Thus, parents promise to nurture the seed of faith planted in their child at baptism. If young plants get all of the support and protection they need, they will grow to be strong healthy plants that can stand by themselves and produce beautiful fruit on their own.

- ✚ Here's another way to think of it. Martin Luther used this illustration ... (Boat)... In baptism, God picks you up out of the waters of life to keep you from drowning in your sin. God places you in a boat of his grace and love. Baptism doesn't guarantee that you are going to stay in that boat forever. You have free will and are given choices so you can even choose to jump out of the boat. But the safety of the boat and God's grace is always close by.
- ✚ Baptism is not magic; it isn't an eternal fire insurance policy. Baptism is not a religious ceremony or ritual that will guarantee you will remain a lifelong Christian and automatically go to heaven. But it does guarantee you God's grace and forgiveness throughout your life.
- ✚ Why do we baptize babies in the Lutheran church? Partly, it is to illustrate how little baptism really has to do with us - babies are pretty much innocent bystanders in the whole thing. It's really all about God's action. Babies are trusting, humble, forgiving and dependent...all of the things we as Christians should be toward our God. God's grace is a gift to us.

Look at Baptism Service

- ✚ Baptism is done in 2 steps: 1) A pastor applies the water in the name of the God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. 2) Then the sign of the cross is placed on your forehead and the invisible sign of God's Spirit is placed in you forever. God breathes his spirit in you right then and there!
Can you locate these two steps of Baptism in the Baptism service when the watermark is put on you? (POURING OF WATER -- WASHING AND SEALING AND MARKING)
Baptism sticks with us even though the baptismal water is dried from your head.

✚ Centuries ago in the days of the early church, people would come to be baptized at a much larger pool or body of water than we have in the baptismal font. They were immersed under water and held under until they were out of breath. What do you suppose the first thing they did when they were let up out of the water? They took in a deep breath! When they went under the water, they believed they were really drowning their old sinful self and when they came up, they breathed in the power of the Holy Spirit and new life. They had the strength to live as followers of Christ! They felt reborn...brand new! That was powerful symbolism. We also believe that at baptism God breathes into us the Holy Spirit and the power to live as followers of Christ with all the benefits of forgiveness and eternal life.

✚ CAN YOU FIND THE GIFTS OF BAPTISM SPOKEN IN THIS SERVICE? Holy Spirit gives us faith, (the ability to believe in things you haven't seen) the assurance that our sins will always be forgiven, and promise of eternal life.

✚ Let's look at the service of Holy Baptism and find the promises that your parents and sponsors made. Let's talk for a minute about promises. When you think about it, much of our world and our lives are based on promises. People make and keep and unfortunately break promises all the time. Think of the important role of promises in your family. What are some of those? (Pause for answers.)

✚ Promises are the glue that holds a family together. Promises are an important part of your religious life too. Baptism is a promise. Who makes a promise at baptism? Parents, sponsors, congregation, God. God makes covenant promises at each baptism - the kind that can never be broken. When you were baptized, God made a promise to you that you would always be His child. He would never leave you or forsake you. Your parents and sponsors have made promises to God. With the gift of baptism comes a serious and important responsibility. What are the ways that responsibility is carried out? (Nurturing your faith at home and at church) What are some of the ways, the church nurtures your faith? What are some of the ways your family nurtures your faith?

✚ Symbols of Baptism: We use another sign of the kingdom in our baptismal service. Anyone know what it is? Light! Jesus is the light that came into a dark sinful world. Because of the gifts of baptism, we are to let our light shine in this dark world too. How do we do that? (Pause for answers.)

- ✚ Then you are welcomed by the church family into the family of God.
- ✚ Finally in each worship and baptismal service we affirm our faith in the Apostles Creed, which has been a statement of faith for many of God's children though out the ages. It sums up what we believe about God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. How many of you know this by heart? (Optional: Have students and their families lead the congregation in the Apostles Creed the following week as they remember their baptism.)

Blessing by the Baptismal Font and Group Picture

Before you leave to do additional activities, we will gather around the baptismal font for a family baptismal blessing. We come back to the baptismal font to remember that you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. We remember that God made water a sign of the kingdom as well as candle light a symbol of Jesus being the light in our dark world, empowering us to then be reflections of His light in our world.

Gather around the font for a baptismal blessing (see below).

Take a Group Picture to share in worship.

Additional Activities

Today we have three activities for you to do during the rest of our time together:

1. Visiting Baptismal Prayer Stations to help you explore what your baptism has to do with your day to day living.
2. Remembering Your Baptism Station to recall details of your baptisms, complete a baptism certificate, baptism worksheet, and a family tree. Who is helping you grow as a child of God?
3. Making Baptism banners to explore some of the symbols of baptism and make a memento of your baptism day.

<p>I was baptized at Sheridan</p>	<p>I was <u>not</u> baptized as a baby</p>	<p>I was baptized in a hospital</p>	<p>My family celebrates my baptismal birthday each year</p>
<p>I was not baptized in Nebraska</p>	<p>I have a keepsake from my baptism</p>	<p>I know what my name means</p>	<p>I know the date of my baptism</p>
<p>I was baptized in August, September or October</p>	<p>I know who my sponsors are</p>	<p>Others were baptized at the same time I was</p>	<p>I know what Matthew 28: 19-20 says</p>

BAPTISMAL SERVICE

GREETING - We are gathered to celebrate the Washing of Baptism for FULLNAME.

SCRIPTURE READING - "Then little children were being brought to Jesus in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.' (Matthew 19:13-15)

ANNOUNCEMENT - In Holy Baptism God brings us into a new family and calls us by name - Child of God. Through the Washing of Baptism we celebrate the Holy Spirit coming into our lives. By water and the Word we are given gifts of faith, life, and forgiveness of sins.

BAPTISMAL PROMISES - PARENTNAME and PARENTNAME, out of parental love you have presented NAME in order that he/she might be washed in baptism. The spiritual well-being and nurture of your child is your responsibility. You have chosen SPONSORNAME and SPONSORNAME to NAME's baptismal sponsors. They also have a very important role in the spiritual nurture of your child. So I ask all of you, with God's help, do you promise to nurture the faith of your child at home and as you bring him/her to worship and education classes within the Christian community? If so, answer, "**We promise to do so, knowing God will help us.**"

POURING OF WATER - God made water a sign of the Kingdom and of cleansing and of rebirth. Our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. Out of divine love our Lord commanded that we go and baptize all people in the name of the Living God. Let us respond to that love and wash NAME in the life-giving water.

WASHING OF BAPTISM

SEALING AND MARKING - FULLNAME, Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

PRAYER - Gracious Lord, we thank you for the new name you give us in Holy Baptism. We thank you for the Holy Spirit coming into our lives. We pray for your child, NAME. Watch over him/her. Guide him/her as he/she grows in faith. Look with favor upon PARENTNAME and PARENTNAME. Help them to know you, to live with your love, to teach your truth, and to tell the story of Jesus to this child, so that NAME may hear your word and know of your presence. As a Christian community, remind us of the promises of Baptism and make us examples of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

GIVING OF BAPTISMAL CANDLE (*Pastor lights candle - may give to a sponsor*) "Let your light so shine before others!"

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION - NAME, welcome to God's family. (*said by congregation*)

AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL FAITH
(*stand*) (Apostles' Creed)
I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. 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.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

The First Article

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

The Second Article

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

The Third Article

*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.*

The Great Commission

Then Jesus came to them and 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the ages."

Matthew 28:18-20

Baptismal Blessing

Light the Christ candle

All: Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify their father in heaven.

Children: Lord God, thank you for the new name you gave me in Holy Baptism and for making me a member of your family.

All: In baptism, God brings us into his family and calls us his own. In baptism, God gives us the gifts of faith and the Holy Spirit, love, eternal life, forgiveness and strength to live a Godly life. In return for this gift, God asks us to be faithful to Him and live a life of service to others.

Children: We are all sinners. Even though we want to do what is right, we make the wrong choices. What does Baptism mean for our daily living?

Parents: Baptism reminds us that we can be washed clean every time we don't live up to God's plan for us. The gift of baptism reminds us that we can start new each day to try to live more like Jesus. In remembering our baptism we remember we are a child of God and we inherit all the gifts of grace God has for His children.

Children: Jesus commands us to "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Parent's Prayer: Gracious God, hear our prayers for our child. Show _____ how you are at work daily in his/her life. Open his/her heart and mind to know your way more fully. Keep him/her safe from harm and danger and guide him/her to grow in faith. Equip us Lord, to be teachers and examples of your righteousness for our children. Guide us as we nurture your precious gift of faith in this child that you have entrusted in our care. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Children: (Affirm your Baptismal faith by reciting the Apostles' Creed with your parents.)

Parents: (come to the font, dip your fingers in the water and touch your child's forehead in the sign of the cross as you say) _____ (child's full name) "You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."