



Lent 2023

Baptism Stories

Peace Lutheran Church

www.PeaceLutheranKnoxville.org

My Baptism Story

Name _____

Baptism Date _____

Baptism Location _____

Congregation _____

Pastor _____

Godparents / sponsors _____

Special memories of the day _____

Baptismal Theology (*Scripture, hymns, and teachings that help describe what God did for me in my baptism*) _____

Ways my baptism influences my life today (*How does it influence your identity, your commitments, your values, your work, your thoughts, words, or deeds?*)

Dear Peace Family,

This Lent we are exploring the stories of our baptisms. I did not seriously begin to explore the story of my baptism until I got to college and seminary and read what Martin Luther had to say about the great gift of Baptism. He wrote in his Large Catechism that, “It is of the greatest importance that we regard baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted.”

Throughout Lent we’re going to explore this excellent, glorious, and exalted thing that God has brought about in our lives. One step of our exploration is to explore the specifics of our own story: what can we know about where and when were we baptized? Secondly we’ll explore what it is that the Triune God promised to do in our baptism. Finally we’ll take the chance to reflect on what baptism means to us today, and how it is shaping our lives in small ways and large.

This devotion book includes scriptures, hymns, and theological teachings about the sacrament of Holy Baptism. These are intended as a starting point for your reflection and exploration of the gift. There will also be questions to help you explore your baptism. You can begin to record your own thoughts on the inside front cover of this booklet.

Baptism stories on YouTube. Leading up to Lent more than fifteen pastors and lay people throughout the church shared the story of their baptism with Pastor Stephen. These were recorded and will be made available on our YouTube channel for you to watch throughout Lent. You’ll hear from Bishop Kevin Strickland (Southeastern Synod ELCA), Mother Elizabeth Farr (Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan), Father Doug Owens (All Saints Catholic Church), Dr. David Brondos (Mexico), Diego Gil (Guatemala), and lots of other Lutherans across the country. Access videos at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville

Know that I am praying for you in this Lenten season, especially as you explore your story of baptism. As you explore I pray that you are drawn more deeply into the salvation that Christ brings about through his death and resurrection.

In Christ,
Pr. Stephen

February 22

As we begin the Lenten season with the call to return to the life God gives us in Christ. Reflect on this poetry written by Cathy Skogen-Soldner (ELW 453).

*We are people created, chosen by God.
Then we're washed ever gently, in mercy and love.
Sin has power no more. Jesus opened the door
to a fountain bringing healing, and wholeness and more.*



Which images in this hymn speak to you as you begin the Lenten journey?

February 23

Pastor Drew Yoos from Lutheridge shares his baptism story about how he spit up during his baptism. And that's ok because baptism is about God's love for you even on the days when you spit up or cry. Pr. Drew also wants you to know that when you are baptized, you are baptized into something larger than yourself.

Watch Pastor Drew's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



Did you spit up or cry at your baptism? If there is someone living that you could ask, consider reaching out to them this week. If not, simply give thanks to God for that person in prayer.

February 24

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19: "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."



Hear the good news, God wants "all nations" that means you, too.

February 25

Mother Elizabeth Farr from Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan shares her baptism story about the “indissoluble” moment of her baptism. She shares that in baptism we are brought into the body of Christ and there is nothing that I can do that can inactivate the grace of God in the sacrament of baptism.

Watch Mother Elizabeth’s story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



Since baptism is “indissoluble” what do you think this says about the God whom we worship, the God who is at work in baptism?

February 26

In Mark 16:16 we hear: “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.” The front half of this verse underscores the reality of God’s “indissoluble” action (to borrow Mother Elizabeth’s phrase from February 25). The second half of this verse underscores for Martin Luther that we are not to treat baptism as an indifferent matter, like putting on a new red coat. Rather baptism is of the greatest importance and we should regard baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted (Large Catechism).



How do you regard baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted?

February 27

Consider this poetry written by Ruth Duck (ELW 454).

*Remember and rejoice, renewed by floods of grace.
We bear the sign of Jesus Christ, that time cannot erase.*



What do you remember about your baptism?

February 28

Diego Gil from the Iglesia Luterana Augustina de Guatemala shares his baptism story, the gift of God's grace, and a beautiful tradition in the Guatemalan church where you remember your baptism at the end of the service. Diego also shares video from several local pastors in Guatemala who gathered for a recent leadership development retreat. In the video you'll see them reading from Luther's Small Catechism.

Watch Diego's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



How does God's grace figure into your understanding of baptism?

March 1

Martin Luther writing in his Large Catechism:

To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by human beings but by God himself. Although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act.



What does it mean to you that baptism is God's own act?

March 2

Father Doug Owen from All Saints Catholic Church shares his baptism story. Even though our motives for baptism may be mixed, baptism actually does something to us. Through it God transforms our lives. Lutherans and Roman Catholics both understand Holy Baptism to be a sacrament, a gift from God that actually gives us God's grace in such a way that it does what it says it will do.

Watch Fr. Doug's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



What was your motivation for being baptized?

March 3

In Titus 3:5-8 we hear these words about how God has saved us.

When the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy 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.



What have you discovered about the water of rebirth and renewal where you were baptized? Was it in a lake or river, was it in a small font or a large pool?

March 4

Andrea Roche was baptized on the back of her family's boat. It was quite the party which is fitting for the joy of baptism. What do you celebrate about your baptism? Perhaps the people who were there, or the gift that God gave?

Watch Andrea's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



What do you have to celebrate about your baptism?

March 5

St. Paul wrote to the church in Rome about baptism. Through baptism we are united with Jesus Christ's death and his resurrection. Romans 6:3-12

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is

freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.



Through baptism God joins you to Jesus' death and resurrection, freeing you from the power of sin, promising you that like Jesus you will certainly be raised to eternal life. How does this scripture figure into your understanding of baptism?

March 6

You'll notice a connection in this hymn to what we read in Romans 6 (March 5). Reflect on this poetry written by John C. Ylvisaker (ELW 451).

*We are baptized in Christ Jesus, we are baptized in his death;
that as Christ is raised victorious, we might live a brand new life.
And if we have been united in a dreadful death like his,
we will all be reunited, for he lives.*



What parts of this hymn give you hope?

March 7

Rev. Dr. David Brondos serves as an ELCA Missionary in Mexico teaching at the Professor of Theological and Biblical Studies at the Theological Community of Mexico, a consortium of seminaries in Mexico City. His baptism story includes an emphasis on the new life that God gives us in baptism.

Watch Dr. Brondos' story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



Do you have a bulletin or certificate from your baptism?

March 8

Martin Luther writing in his Large Catechism:

We must learn why and for what purpose baptism has been instituted, that is, what benefits, gifts, and effects it brings. Nor can we better understand this than from the words of Christ quoted above, “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). For no one is baptized in order to become a prince, but, as the words say, “to be saved.” To be saved, as everyone well knows, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, to enter into Christ’s kingdom, and to live with him forever.



What parts of what Luther wrote most encourage your faith? Which parts challenge you?

March 9

Pastor Nancy Christensen is a retired ELCA pastor who served most recently at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Atlanta, GA. The story of her baptism is poignant and painful, yet it is rooted deeply in our God’s mercy. Though she knows virtually nothing of her actual baptism, she knows the God who chose her in those waters and loves her unconditionally.

Watch Pastor Nancy’s story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



If you don’t know much about your baptism story, that’s ok. What parts can you claim? And most importantly what can you say about the God who chose you in those waters?

March 10

Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about being born “*anóthen*.” It’s a Greek word that means both “born again” and “born from above.” Both meanings are intended in this passage and give us a glimpse of the new birth that God gives us in the waters of baptism. John 3:3,5

Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’ ... Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.



Why do you think Jesus talks about baptism with the language of “birth”?

March 11

Pastor Mary Ann Siefke is an ELCA pastor serving at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, OH. The story of her baptism is infused with the songs of faith and the Spirit’s transformative presence. She refers to ELW 407, “O Living Breath of God”

Watch Pastor Mary Ann’s story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



What hymns speak to your life of faith? Do you know any that were sung at your baptism?

March 12

Pastor Mary Ann Siefke referred to ELW 407, “O Living Breath of God” in her baptismal story (March 11). Reflect on this poetry written by Osvaldo Catena.

O living Breath of God, bearing us to life through baptismal waters;

O living Breath of God, sighing with creation for freedom’s birth:

Come now, and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant.

O living Breath of God, Holy Spirit, breath in us as we pray.



What parts of this hymn cause you to see your baptism in a new light?

March 13

Paul writes to the church in Ephesus that in their baptism they were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13-14

13In [Christ] you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.



How do these images of the Holy Spirit expand your understanding of the gift of the Holy Spirit?

March 14

Pastor Jonathan Hemphill is an ELCA pastor serving as an assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Life. He says “Baptism is that moment when you know you are marked and claimed as part of God’s family forever.” Yet it shapes Pr. Jonathan to walk in that grace of God so that you be present and love people.

Watch Pastor Jonathan’s story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



Pastor Jonathan remembers that he was baptized on Easter Sunday. Do you remember what day you were baptized on?

March 15

Martin Luther writing in his Large Catechism:

Thus, we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and say: "But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." This is the reason why these two things are done in baptism; the body has water poured over it, because all it can receive is the water, and in addition the Word is spoken so that the soul may receive it. Because the water and the Word together constitute one baptism, both body and soul shall be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word in which it believes, the body because it is united with the soul and apprehends baptism in the only way it can. No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than baptism, for through it we become complete holy and blessed, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire.



In what circumstances do you need to draw strength and courage from your baptism?

March 16

Allison Lizdas serves as an assistant to the Bishop for advocacy in the Southeastern Synod. She doesn't know much about her baptism story but she does know that through it the Holy Spirit has called her to ministry. The same holds for you, too. In your baptism the Holy Spirit has called you to serve in ministry as part of God's work in the world.

Watch Allison Lizdas' story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



As you consider your life, how has the Holy Spirit been at work calling you to join God's work for justice, peace, healing, truth, etc.?

March 17

St. Patrick was born in 372 and died in 466. He had a powerful ministry in Ireland and brought many to faith in God the Holy Trinity. This poetic hymn is attributed to him (ELW 450).

*I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity
by invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three.*

*I bind this day to me forever, by power of faith,
Christ's incarnation, his baptism in the Jordan River,
his cross of death for my salvation,
his bursting from the spiced tomb, his riding upon the heavenly way,
his coming at the day of doom,
I bind unto myself today.*



What do you think it means to “bind” unto yourself the name of the Trinity, the life and ministry of Jesus?

March 18

Pastor Sean Smith is a United Methodist pastor serving in White Rock, NM. He has a powerful story to share about his faith journey through the church and other faith traditions as he asked deep questions. His story also includes having been baptized twice in Baptist / Believer Baptism traditions, and how he understands what God did for him in those moments. And it wasn't only about that moment baptism is a call to ministry in the world.

Watch Pastor Sean's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



In your baptism you've been anointed to be part of God's work in the world today. In what ways are you currently participating in God's work today? Can you claim that work as being rooted in your baptism?

March 19

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth trying to bring them together beyond their factions into the unity of the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

12For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13For 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.



When have you had the experience of noticing the “many members” of the “one body”? Perhaps traveling or visiting other congregations?

March 20

In Marty Haugen’s hymn “All Are Welcome” we hear the vision cast by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13. There’s an invitation in the poetry to build a “house” (church, community) that reflects the “one body” Paul spoke about.

*Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely life,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:*

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*



What was it like when you experienced God’s welcome through a church community?

March 21

Cat Ontiveros is an advisor to our Synod Youth Leadership Organization. In her baptism story she says that “I was blessed to grow up in a community where church was fun for me, and still is.” She shares that she had those people who invited her to church camp and helped her to grow in faith.

Watch Cat Ontiveros’ story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



Who has helped to make church “fun” (engaging, meaningful, joyous) in your life?

March 22

In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, article IX “Baptism” we hear:

That God approves the baptism of little children is shown by the fact that God gives the Holy Spirit to those so baptized. For if this baptism had been ineffectual, the Holy Spirit would have been given to no one, none would have been saved, and ultimately there would be no church. Even taken by itself, this point can sufficiently strengthen good and godly minds against the fanatical opinions of the Anabaptists (those traditions taught one had to be baptized again as an adult).



How have you responded when someone has challenged your baptism?

March 23

Pastor Michael Jannett serves as Assistant to the Bishop for formation and communication. His baptism story speaks powerfully to the importance of community when it comes to baptism. Both in case you need someone to catch you down the river, and to support you in the life of faith.

Watch Pastor Michael’s story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



What community (past/present) has God given you to support you in your baptized life? Consider reaching out to someone with a word of affirmation.

March 24

Ruth Duck's hymn "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters" are some profound hopes that we might bring to God for the baptism of our children. I imagine those who brought you to be baptized had similar hopes.

*Wash, O God, our sons and daughters,
where your cleansing waters flow.
Number them among your people;
bless as Christ blessed long ago.
Weave them garments bright and sparkling;
compass them with love and light.
Fill, anoint them; send your Spirit,
holy dove and heart's delight.*



These hopes are rooted in what God promises to do in baptism. How do these images speak to your understanding of what God has done for you in baptism?

March 25

Pastor Bonita Knox is a retired ELCA pastor who speaks powerfully to the importance of our stories of faith. Her ancestors emigrated to the United States from Odessa as part of the Volga Deusch and they brought their faith with them.

Watch Pastor Bonita's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



What faith do you bring with you?

March 26

In 1 Peter 2:9-10 we hear this beautiful description of who we are as God's baptized people. Now you are God's people. Now you have received mercy.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



How does the "now" of 1 Peter shape your imagination of how you understand Baptism?

March 27

F. Bland Tucker's poetry stands at the heart of the hymn "Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death" (ELW 452). In it, we hear an incredible depiction of God's grace for us in baptism.

*Awake, O sleeper, rise from death, and Christ shall give you light;
so learn his love, it's length and breadth, its fullness, depth, and height.*



Consider the length and breadth, fullness, depth, and height of Christ's love. What ways do you try to describe the vastness and quality of God's grace?

March 28

Pastor Bob Barndt is a retired ELCA pastor who served in Midland, TX and shares his baptismal story with a huge emphasis upon God's grace.

Watch Pastor Bob's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



He was baptized in the same font that his mom and grandfather were baptized in. Do you have any family connections in your baptismal story?

March 29

In the Augsburg Confession, article IX “Concerning Baptism” we hear:

Concerning baptism it is taught that it is necessary, that grace is offered through it, and that one should also baptized children, who thought such baptism are entrusted to God and become pleasing to him.



How might you summarize the importance of baptism?

March 30

Pastor Rick Ohsiek serves as pastor of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Maryville, TN. The meaning of his baptism has been enhanced throughout his life as he has witnessed many others who have been baptized including a family that was tied to the Navy whose child was baptized in the ship’s bell.

Watch Pastor Rick’s story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



When you have seen others baptized, what has stood out to you about their baptism? How might God’s grace for them be a mirror for your own life in understanding your baptism?

March 31

Handt Hanson’s hymn “Waterlife” (ELW 457) speaks to the reality that many who are baptized as infants experience.

*Before I can remember the covenant was sealed
with Father, Son, and Spirit, in water was revealed.
The cleansing was for certain, with water and the Word;
gentle words were spoken, in heaven they were heard.*



Might this be a way for you to think about your own baptism?

April 1

Pastor Nancy Christensen is a retired ELCA pastor in Atlanta, GA who most recently served as pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Atlanta. Pastor Nancy embraces the painful parts of her story and reveals the true nature of our God who meets us and finds us. Listen when she says, "God does the choosing."

Watch Pastor Nancy's story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



If your baptism story has painful parts, do you think you might be able to follow Pr. Nancy's example and claim God's loving work even in the midst of that which is painful?

April 2

On this Palm / Passion Sunday we begin the journey of Holy Week with our Lord Jesus. On this day may you rejoice that Jesus is your king.



When you wave your palm branch and shout "Hosanna" (meaning God save us now) try to remember that in baptism God has saved you.

April 3

On Monday of Holy Week hear the words that begins the rite of Baptism (ELW page 227).

In baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the church, the body of Christ. Living with Christ and in the communion of the saints, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God.



What parts of this are most helpful to you for understanding baptism?

April 4

Bishop Kevin Strickland serves as Bishop of the Southeastern Synod ELCA. His baptismal story speaks to the truth that it is through our baptism that we are called “beloved” by our God.

Watch Bishop Kevin’s story at www.youtube.com/PeaceLutheranKnoxville



You are beloved of God. How might this phrase figure into your baptismal story?

April 5

On Wednesday of Holy Week hear the words of the responsibilities entrusted with for parents who bring their children for Baptism (ELW page 228). These responsibilities can shape all of our lives as baptized people.

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,
and nurture them in faith and prayer,*

*So that your children may learn to trust God,
proclaim Christ through word and deed,
care for others and the world God made,
and to work for justice and peace.*



What parts of this stand out most to you? Why?

April 6

On Maundy Thursday of Holy Week we recall the new commandment that Jesus gives his disciples. This forms the core of the life we are called to live as the baptized. John 13:34-35

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."



How has Jesus loved you? On the cross? In baptism?

April 7

On Good Friday of Holy Week we recall the Passion of our Lord centering in his crucifixion. The heart of our Christian lives is centered on the cross of Christ. On Good Friday we read the Passion of Our Lord from John 18:1—19:42.



Know that you are ones who bear the sign of the cross.

April 8

On Holy Saturday of Holy Week hear the prayer prayed over the water in baptism. This is a day of rest to recall the mighty deeds of God throughout history.

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you.



Through your baptism God has joined you personally to salvation history. No longer is it for “them” but it is for you.

April 9

The Resurrection of Our Lord is the day the world changed, death is defeated, sin is overcome, and Christ emerges from the tomb victorious. Alleluia! Alleluia!



May you rejoice in our Lord's resurrection.

Now it is your turn

What is your baptismal story? Use the space included here and on the inside front cover to make notes about your story.

