

the seed of faith planted in baptism to mature into a deep commitment to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to produce a crop (using their spiritual gifts) to produce abundantly for the sake of the kingdom and to the glory of God. For this reason, with child baptisms, we actually begin to prepare for Confirmation classes early on with Three-Year-Old Enfoldment and Welcome to Sunday School, Second Grade Holy Communion Instruction and Third Grade Confirmation Orientation when students receive Bibles and guides for Family Devotions at home.

What should I do if I'm an adult and have never been baptized? Is it too late?

Absolutely not! Lutheran Christians baptize infants, children, youth, and adults regardless of age, gender, orientation, race, or ethnic background. First Lutheran Church baptizes adults often. Adults preparing for baptism meet with Pastor Jake and talk about faith and what it means to be baptized.

Jesus tells a story (see Luke 15:11-32) of a father whose son runs away from the family home. After a time away, this son realizes how lost he now is without his father, and decides to return home and beg to become a slave in his father's house. But once the father sees his son, he immediately celebrates and welcomes him back into the family with open arms! So it is with our Heavenly Father — God— and his love for all those who have run away from Him. Return to the Lord, repent of your sins, be baptized, and you will be welcomed into the family of God (again or for the first time, whatever the case may be for you) with open arms!

If I was baptized as a child, then left the church, and now have experienced a conversion to faith in Jesus Christ, can I get re-baptized?

The Bible tells many stories of conversion to the Christian faith, but not one story of re-baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If you have already been baptized, a second baptism will not change

God's love for you. You can, however, participate in a "recognition of baptism" service if desired, which can be a very meaningful event for those who want to mark their new faith in a significant and physical way.

Does baptism serve as an "insurance policy" for salvation?

The Bible does not say that we are saved by baptism. It clearly says that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 2:8). The assurance of salvation comes when the promises proclaimed at baptism are claimed and confirmed.

If I was baptized in another denomination, should I get baptized now as a Lutheran?

No. There's no such thing as a Lutheran baptism or a Catholic baptism, or a Non-Denominational baptism, etc. Christian baptism that happens with the words "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*" is the same, regardless of where it takes place. Provided you were baptized in the triune name of God, you do not need to be baptized in a Lutheran church to become a part of this Christian community. If you have questions about whether or not your baptism was Christian, please visit with the pastor.

What if I don't know and have no way of finding out if I was baptized or not?

Call a pastor. Schedule a baptism. Get baptized.

Why do some churches "dunk" the people who get baptized, and other churches do not?

You might be surprised—the answer is a historical and climate-based one, not Biblical. When the church originated in the warm

climates of the Middle East, immersion baptism was the preferred means. When Christianity expanded into parts of Europe, immersion ("dunking") became a major problem in the winter! Consequently, the practice of "sprinkling" water emerged. Both practices are acceptable for us as Lutheran Christians. Our baptismal font at First Lutheran is built in such a way that immersion is not really possible, so if this would be meaningful for you, one possibility is to find a place at an area river or lake for a service with friends and family.

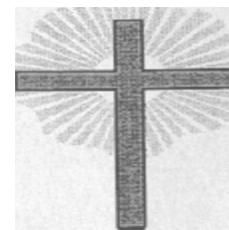
Who can baptize?

For the sake of order in the church, ordained pastors who are called to the public ministry of Word and sacraments preside at a baptism. In extraordinary circumstances or in the case of an emergency, any Christian person can baptize someone with any kind of water in any kind of setting "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*"

What if I want a private baptism?

Baptism is a public event for the whole family of God to celebrate, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ (the whole church) should be welcome to participate and be present. If, however, getting baptized in a public setting is the only thing keeping you from getting baptized, please call the pastor, and other arrangements can be made.

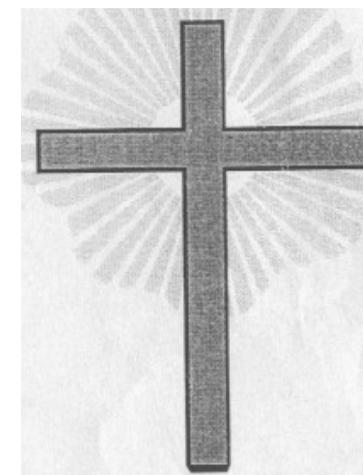
If you would like to schedule a baptism at First Lutheran Church, please call the church office at 320-632-6667.



Adapted from baptism brochure, Lutheran Church of Hope, West Des Moines, Iowa, used by permission

BAPTISM FAQ

(FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)



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Baptism FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Why do Christians baptize?

Jesus commands his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew. 28:19) This is not a polite suggestion, it is a command from Jesus which he gives as his “last words” before his ascension into heaven. Baptism, then, is not optional for Christians who want to carry out this “Great Commission” of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of two sacraments (sacrament means “God giving of God’s self”) instituted by Jesus (the other one is the Lord’s Supper), and offered as a very simple, real, down-to-earth and physical way of experiencing God in the world today.

How did the first Christians baptize in response to this command of Jesus?

The Book of Acts tells 9 stories of baptism as practiced by the early Christian church:

2:14-42	3,000 people in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost
8: 12-13	Simon and the men and women of Samaria
8:35-40	Ethiopian eunuch
9:1-19	Saul (Paul)
10:44-48	Gentiles in Caesarea
16:11-15	Lydia and her household
16:31-34	Jailer at Philippi and his entire family

18:5-11	Crispus, all his household, many of the Corinthians
19:1-10	Some disciples in Ephesus
22:6-16	Paul’s conversion/ baptism story retold

So what can I learn about baptism from the Book of Acts?

One very important learning is that the early Christians baptized entire households, women, and Gentiles (people who were often overlooked by the religious leaders of Jesus’ day). The Book of Acts (and the entire Bible for that matter) offers no age, gender, or ethnic restrictions for those who are baptized (see Galatians 3:27-28). The Bible does not teach us that “entire households were baptized, except for the little children.”

Baptism is a gift from God offered to all as a “mark” of faith in Jesus Christ. Since “entire families” were baptized together by the apostles of Jesus, it is only logical to assume that some of those families would have included young children and/or infants. Additionally, 3rd Century writers like Hippolytus, Origen, and Cyprian make it abundantly clear that infant baptism was regarded as common practice in the early Christian church (source: The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol.1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973) pp. 290-291).

Is that why Lutherans and many other Christian denominations practice infant baptism?

Yes, and there are other reasons too: 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 19:14)

In the Bible — time and time again — God initiates our relationship with Him. God chooses us first and then waits for our faithful response. The practice of circumcision for 8-day old boys in the Old Testament was a sign of God choosing the male offspring of Abraham and Sarah. (see Genesis 17:10-12) An 8-day old infant cannot choose to believe in God or accept him as personal Lord and Savior. Instead, God chooses these infants to be included as a part of His family. So it starts with God.

In the New Testament, the apostles (see Acts 15:1-21) excluded circumcision as a necessary sign for becoming a part of the Christian community. So what sign of entrance into the family of God was used? We already know from the Book of Acts, the answer is baptism! (see also Colossians 2:11-12) In baptism, God initiates a relationship with the baptized person (whether or not that person is able to accept Jesus as personal Lord and Savior) — drawing that person into His family, and then waits for that person’s faithful response to the good news of salvation. God chooses us. (see John 15:16)

Isn’t faith a pre-requisite for baptism? How can an infant have faith?

In the Book of Acts, adults are baptized *after* coming to faith. For adults who desire to be baptized in the church today, this still holds true. Come to faith first (repent; turn back to God), *then* be baptized to mark the conversion and to be cleansed of all sin.

An infant certainly cannot deduce that Jesus is Savior and Lord, or believe in him. Yet for infants and children, a public statement of faith is not a requirement for baptism. So instead, parent/s, sponsor/s, and the church speak on behalf of the infant regarding faith.

If infant baptism is nothing more than something we (parent/s, sponsor/s, and the church) do one day for the sake of family tradition or because we just think it’s the “right thing to do” and then forget about it—it loses significance and is a hollow ceremony. Baptism is not an end to itself. It is a starting point.

Jesus tells a story (the parable of the sower, Mark 4:1-20) in which he teaches that faith is like good seed planted on good soil, which grows and blossoms to produce abundantly. This is God’s goal for the baptized infant—the Holy Spirit is present in the water, and certainly has the power to “plant” a seed of faith in the soul of an infant. Once a seed is planted, you can’t see it. Yet it has great potential to grow and produce abundantly. How? By hearing the Word of God and accepting it (see Mark 4:20).

Infant baptism is the starting point, then—the planting of the seed of faith which will be nurtured through the proclamation of the gospel over the days, months, and years to come by parent/s, sponsor/s, and the church. If the Word of God is not going to be proclaimed to this child as he/she grows in years, then the seed of faith will not grow. Faith comes from hearing. (see Romans 10:8-15)

Is there something the church does, then, to “mark” the event when baptized children do come to faith in Jesus Christ?

Yes—Confirmation. As baptized infants grow, faith grows through the hearing of God’s Word. When they mature spiritually to the point of making a public affirmation of the Christian faith (saying “yes” to God!)—typically after a 2-year confirmation teaching ministry for middle school students—they confirm their faith. We take Confirmation seriously at First Lutheran Church and see it as an opportunity for