

## **Topics in this series**

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4. Baptism and the Encounter with Love
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Introduction and Resource List  
User's Guide

*Talking Points on The Amazing Gift of Your Baptism* is a set of nine leaflets issued by the Department for Ecumenical Affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to invite conversation about baptism as it is understood by several different church bodies. These are not intended as position papers but as discussion starters with the hope of giving insight and deepening faith as well as fostering Christian unity. These may be reprinted without permission for use in small groups and other congregational settings.

Your ideas about these topics are very welcome. To submit personal reflections or the results of a group discussion, use the accompanying Response and Evaluation form or e-mail [eainfo@elca.org](mailto:eainfo@elca.org)

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*Living in God's amazing grace*

## *Talking points on* **The Amazing Gift of Your Baptism**

### **Introduction and Resource List**

**“What I mean is that each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”**

**– I Corinthians 1:12-13**

As it was for Paul and the early church, so it is for us today. We are not baptized in the name of the Lutheran church, or the Presbyterian church, or the Methodist church. We are baptized – *all of us* – in the name of Jesus Christ. In the Nicene Creed, we say, “We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” There is one baptism, one faith, one Spirit, one Lord. Jesus prayed, “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they all may be one.”<sup>1</sup>

Although we are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, we are welcomed into a particular community of faith, be it Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Baptist. Along with parents and godparents, a particular faith community promises to tend the baptismal journey of its members. And yet, when the faith community promises to tend to the newly baptized, such a promise is for a child of God within the whole body of Christ. This resource on Baptism seeks to help congregations explore

the intersection of their baptisms as children of God in light of the whole body of Christ. In this resource differing yet thoughtful reflections on baptism enrich each community of faith's confessional understanding of this sacrament.

Martin Luther exhorts his hearers: "Ah, dear Christians, let us not value and treat this unspeakable gift so half-heartedly. For Baptism is our only comfort and doorway to all God's possessions and to the communion of all the saints."<sup>2</sup> If we see Baptism as "a doorway to the communion of all the saints," then we can start to talk about how we share an abiding unity for the children of God, a unity strengthened in the particular expressions of faith.

The ELCA's guiding statement on the practice of Word and Sacrament begins with how "Christians continue in the covenant God made with them in Baptism by participation in the community of faith," and ends with Christians "striving for justice and peace in all the world."<sup>3</sup> God claims us at our baptisms, and thereafter the Christian hope for justice and peace is essential to our vocation for the sake of the world. This resource speaks to the amazing journey of God's claim in Sacrament, our response to God's Word, our vocation in the world, and finally our return to the one who has claimed us through death and resurrection. The enclosed *Talking Points* are meant to *point you in a direction* – the conversation *you foster* based from your own confessional heritage, and the reflections you express to others will carry you along your own baptismal journey.

## **Resources**

- ELCA Department for Ecumenical Affairs Web site [www.elca.org/ecumenical/](http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/)
- *The Use of the Means of Grace*, a statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. [www.elca.org/dcm/worship/worship/sacraments/umg.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/worship/sacraments/umg.html)
- "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry," the World Council of Churches. [www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/bem1.html](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/bem1.html)

- *Luther's Small Catechism*, chapters on "The Sacrament of Holy Baptism," and "The Service of Holy Baptism" (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org))
- *Baptism: More than a Ceremony*. Mosaic Television — view on the Web or order on VHS. [www.elca.org/co/mosaic/fall02.html](http://www.elca.org/co/mosaic/fall02.html)
- From the ELCA Worship Web site, "What Are Appropriate Baptismal Practices?" [www.elca.org/dcm/worship/faq/baptism/practices.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/faq/baptism/practices.html)
- "Baptismal Beginnings --A Rally Day/Baptism Program" from the 2003 ELCA Christian Education Planning Guide. [www.elca.org/dcm/Christian\\_Education/resources/2002CEProgramPlanner/module1/beginnings.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/Christian_Education/resources/2002CEProgramPlanner/module1/beginnings.html)
- The Episcopal Church Web site: [http://ecusa.anglican.org/index\\_flash.html](http://ecusa.anglican.org/index_flash.html)
- The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Web site: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)
- The Moravian Church in North America Web site: [www.moravian.org](http://www.moravian.org)
- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Web site: [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)
- The Reformed Church in America Web site: [www.rca.org/index.html](http://www.rca.org/index.html)
- The United Church of Christ Web site: [www.ucc.org/index1.html](http://www.ucc.org/index1.html)
- The United Methodist Church Web site: [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)
- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Web site: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

<sup>1</sup> John 17:20.

<sup>2</sup> "The Service of Holy Baptism," *A Contemporary Translation of Luther's Small Catechism*, Augsburg Fortress, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> *Use of the Means of Grace*, Application 17c.