

WISCONSIN FEDERATION OF LUTHERAN ALTAR GUILDS

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NEWSLETTER – Fall 2019

Dear Caretakers of the Lord's Sacred Things:

What a lofty trust we have been given. From the earliest plans for the Tabernacle to today, the Lord has prescribed nothing but the best for His people as they come into His presence. That best is often detailed in the rarity, shine, and purity of the metals of Communion vessels and other chancel furnishings, the use of the finest linens for altar coverings, and so on. But what about us? We poor, sinful beings serve our broken, sinful congregations with limited budgets and scarce opportunities for using things special enough to convey the Lord's means of grace to His people. Sometimes it just doesn't seem like we have enough or that we're doing enough to come close to the Lord's absolute holiness in worship.

That's why He's done it all already. He's already perfected the grace given in and through Baptism. He's already given and shed the body and blood fed to His dear children at our altars. He's already granted eternal life to those under our palls. He's already done it all because He knows we can't do it ourselves. So, we carry out our duties with joy, lifting up to the Lord the best we have: our thankfulness for His perfect gifts, even though it comes in a Baptismal bowl with a bit of tarnish on it, a paten with a scratch that won't polish out, a flagon topped with a cross that isn't quite straight anymore after all these years, and a pall that has one side that should always face away from the congregation.

I'm always drawn back to the words of that wonderful hymn for All Saints Day: "O blest communion, fellowship Divine! We feebly struggle; they in glory shine. Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine. Alleluia! Alleluia" (LSB 677, st 4). Yes, dear friends, our daily and weekly tasks at the altar may at times seem like that feeble struggle; but those struggles shine with God's perfect glory! Blessing, dear friends, on all your service to the Lord. Your services are not in vain!

Rev. Thomas Schmitt

ARTICLE.....BAPTISM

The presentation at our September convention will be on the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the disposal of the elements. As an Altar Guild, we prepare for the Sacrament of Holy Communion more often than we do Holy Baptism. But let's approach the subject of Holy Baptism and the role of the Altar Guild.

What is Baptism?

"Holy Baptism is a rite in which water is applied by washing, pouring, sprinkling or immersing according to God's command and combined with God's Word. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the person being baptized is united with Christ and receives the forgiveness of sins and new life. Infants are baptized and then instructed in the faith, while adults are instructed in the faith and then baptized."

In the sixteenth century the role of sponsors was added and has been retained in various forms today. Godparents or sponsors are appointed by the parents and speak for the child. They testify that the child has been properly baptized, assist in the caring for the child's Christian education (especially, if the child should lose its parents), and to pray for them.

The Old Testament had a rite similar to Baptism: Circumcision for admission into the church. In this covenant God entered into an eternal agreement with the child. So, it is in Baptism - and God never breaks His promises, though the child may break his. Like the father of the Prodigal Son, our Father God waits eagerly for our return

to His welcoming arms, forgiving us for Jesus' sake. This is why it is good to be reminded of our Baptism frequently, as a gift of God.

What are the essential things we as an Altar Guild re responsible to prepare?

1. The Font.....is an item of liturgical furniture which contains a bowl that holds water for use in Holy Baptism. In centuries past and in some traditions today, a Baptistery, which is a separate building or room that adjoins the narthex or chancel of a cathedral, was established for multiple Baptisms. The font can be located in the nave, or at the head of the nave, in the narthex or chancel.

Historically, Baptisms occurred in the waters of a river or in the *mikvahs* (ceremonial bathing pools) of Jewish synagogues. Early Christians actually renovated their homes to accommodate the needs for Baptisms. It wasn't until the 4th century that baptismal fonts appeared at the entrance of church buildings as a visible sign that Baptism was the entry to the Christian community.

Through the years, there were many different designs to the fonts. Some had six or eight sides symbolic of the day of Christ's death (the sixth day of the week) and the resurrection (the eighth day). Cross shaped fonts into which candidates stepped or were carried were designs of the early Christian architects.

Baptismal fonts were usually placed at the entrance to the church in Medieval times. In the last two decades, the baptismal font at the entrance is becoming a common location in the Lutheran churches. This location is a reminder that Baptism is the entrance into the family of God and to worshipers of the continuing blessings of Baptism.

2. Ewer.....is a pitcher of precious metal that is used to bring the water to the baptismal font.
3. Water.....is the visible element used in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.
4. Baptismal shell.....is a real shell or a shell made of precious metal used to apply the water in Holy Baptism.
5. Baptismal Towel/Napkin.....is a piece of cloth that is used to wipe the head of the newly baptized Christian or dry the hands of the pastor. The Baptismal napkin can be trimmed with lace and embroidered with a cross or dove. The napkin is usually given as a remembrance.

Ask your pastor as to the placement of the Ewer, Shell and Baptismal napkin in relationship to the Baptismal Font.

Some additional aids to enhance the significance of Baptism.....

A rose can be placed on the Altar next to the Ewer and given to the participant in remembrance.

Also, some churches have a banner on display which has the biblical verse Isaiah; 43:1 and the child's name.

*I have called you by name.
You are mine.*

Isiah 43:1

It would be interesting to know what your congregation does to commemorate this special day. Please share at our meeting or email this information to be included on our website.

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY-

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SOURCES FOR THE ARTICLE

Altar Guild Manual
Bible
Explanation of the Catechism
Gathered Guests
Luther’s Small Catechism

WFLAG MEMBERSHIP LIST – 2018

Beautiful Savior	Milwaukee
Benediction	Milwaukee
Bethlehem	Sheboygan
Crist Lutheran	Gillett
Divine Savior	Hartford
Elm Grove	Elm Grove
Faith	Merrill
Good Shepherd	Appleton
Immanuel	Westfield
Oklahoma	Milwaukee
Our Redeemer	Iron Mountain MI
Our Savior’s	Sheboygan
Peace	Neenah
St John	Pulaski
St John	Wausau
St John’s	Glendale
St John’s	Mayville
St John’s	Portage
St John’s	Sullivan
St Martin	Chilton
St Paul	Grafton
St Paul	Sheboygan
St Paul	Stevens Point
Trinity	Menasha
Trinity	Sheboygan
Trinity	Wausau

THANK YOU -

**GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERN CHURCH
APPLETON, WISCONSIN**

*For hosting our Annual Meeting
on Saturday, April 21st, 2018.*

*Everyone enjoyed the joining together
for worship, fellowship, information
and your warm hospitality.*

“the Board”

PRAYER -

Heavenly Father, our Creator, help us to
apply the best use of our talents and
abilities in your service. Keep our hearts
humble and our thoughts pure as we serve
you in the preparations of the Holy
Sacraments and the caring for you Altar.

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It is with thankful hearts for this opportunity
to serve you, we pray in the name of Jesus.

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Amen