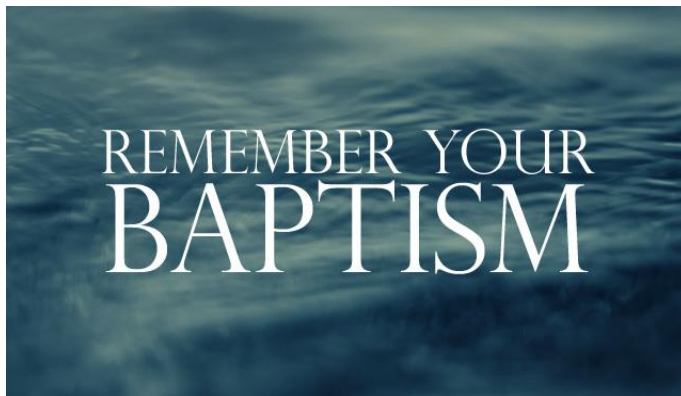


# Covenant News



January 2021

## *Pastor's Spin*



Siblings in Christ of Covenant,

On January 10, we will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. This may not have quite the same spiritual pick-me-up to it as the recent Christmas Eve or even Epiphany easy-to-celebrate celebrations (even through virtual means). Regardless, we usually limit the day to the historical moment when Jesus himself was baptized and prefer to stay along the Jordan shore and be amazed by the put-you-on-the-edge-of-your-seat voice from heaven,

“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” That’s more than enough to spiritually chew on in envisioning how it all sets the stage for the most mind-boggling ministry to the world, including to us. However, I wonder if we should make another stop in our spiritual time-machine, of sorts.

For those of us who celebrated an Affirmation of Baptism day (or some of us might say we dreadfully endured that eventual end to a nightmare Confirmation process), perhaps we need to relive other words that may not have been spoken directly from the heavens, but I have a feeling God would agree with them, nonetheless. For starters, the presiding minister on that special day not just for you, not even for your church family, but for God as well, may have prayed similar words to these:

*Merciful God, we thank you for your precious child, whom you have made your own by water and the Word in baptism. You have called them to yourself, enlightened them with the gifts of you as the Holy Spirit, and nourished them in the community of faith. Uphold your servants in the gifts and promises of baptism, and unite the hearts of all whom you have brought to new birth. We ask this in the name of the Risen Christ. Amen. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 234)*

And by the way, those words still apply to you however many years later.

Along what may have been a dreaded or enlightening Confirmation process, you may have been told that God made a covenant with you at your own baptism even many more years before, when you could not fully respond whether you were interested in holding up your end of the grace-filled bargain. But once you got to your big Affirmation of Baptism day, you got the chance to proclaim if you truly wanted to affirm a vow to live as a present-day disciple of Jesus Christ for the sake of the world. No pressure or anything.

*Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:*

*to live among God's faithful people,*

*to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,*

*to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,*

*to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,*

*and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth? (ELW, p. 236)*

And, yes, by the way: those words still apply. The question can still be asked not just on Confirmation days or Baptism of Our Lord Sundays or when the pastor copies and pastes the words in newsletter articles, but every day: do you really want to be a part of this? Of course, by God's grace, even on the days when you're not so sure, God's gonna hold up the divine end of the amazing-grace bargain for your eternal life, no matter what. But these responsibilities God yearns for all of us to fulfill is not about us impressing God to keep us in the divine good graces, or to better nourish our soul (although it could have that effect); it's that there's a world out there that God still so cherishes, and God insists we have something to offer to improve the circumstances surrounding us.

This past 2020 year may have forced us to dig even deeper into those baptismal vows. What does living among God's faithful people look like when we cannot do so in-person? How exactly should we strive for justice and peace not just for us personally and our family and friends, but for those in our neighborhoods, and even over all the earth (!?!?!). How do we serve people when we're not supposed to get too close just yet? We, evidently, cannot stay on the Jordan shores in the first century or back in the "good 'ole days" of our church memory when we "graduated" from Confirmation. The words, the love, the compassion of God has a way of evolving to whatever situation may arise in our life, in our world. So, may we continue to dig into the words, into the opportunities, into the honored mission God has for us as our Lord's disciples for the sake of the world God loves just as much now as when Jesus came out of the river Jordan waters. Amen (so let it be)!

In Christ,  
Pastor Brad



*From all of us at  
Covenant, we wish  
you and yours a  
wonderful start to  
2021! Happy new  
year*



- 1/5 Linda Wright*
- 1/10 Maud Wright*
- 1/11 Christopher Knerem*
- 1/12 Joshua Reddig*
- 1/14 Kelly (Constant) Bhatnagar*
- 1/16 Rebecca Werner*
- 1/17 Phyllis Nemeth*
- 1/20 John Werner*
- 1/22 Alivia Kyle*
- 1/24 Bryan Treichel*
- 1/25 Janet Wilkens*
- 1/25 Karen Zack*
- 1/28 Jean Smith*
- 1/29 Jean Rusher*



mark  your **Calendar**

Wednesday, February 17: Ash Wednesday  
Sunday, March 28: Palm Sunday  
Thursday, April 1: Maundy Thursday  
Friday, April 2: Good Friday  
Sunday, April 4: Resurrection of Our Lord  
Sunday, May 23: Pentecost Sunday  
Sunday, May 30: Holy Trinity Sunday  
Sunday, October 31: Reformation Sunday  
Sunday, November 7: All Saints Sunday  
Sunday, November 28: First Sunday of Advent  
Friday, December 24: Nativity of Our Lord  
Saturday, December 25: Christmas Day

## ***A Blessing for the New Year and Each Day***

Recently, it was my son's baptismal anniversary. As a pastor, you may expect that we light the baptismal candle every year and make a big deal of marking this occasion. But often it slips in as a secondary thought, which was the case this year.

His baptismal anniversary fell in the middle of the week amid homework, meal preparation and scheduled activities, so I was relieved that I at least remembered to say, "Today's your baptismal anniversary, buddy!" while we were eating supper.

My mom happened to be visiting and told my son, "Your mom can put the sign of the cross on your forehead." He wasn't quite as enthusiastic. "She does that every night," he said, and continued eating.

This made me chuckle, as well as reflect. On one hand, his baptismal anniversary is significant, but I also want him and his sister to know that their baptism is a daily reality. That's why, although there are many things I lose track of as a parent and many ways I fall short each day, I try to remember to bless each of our kids when I tuck them in at night. "God made you special and we love you very much," I say as I mark the sign of the cross on their foreheads.

It's not much, but what I want my kids to learn through this simple bedtime ritual is that God is with them and loves them—no matter what. As their parent, I'd love to be able to protect them from cruelty and harm. Despite this natural inclination, I know how impossible that is.

That's why what I really want is for them to have tools to handle the yuck and muck of life when it happens. The way I see it, that's what the blessing of baptism offers. The promise of our baptism reminds us that God has claimed us as God's own and is with us each day. It reminds us of who we are and where our worth is found. Regardless of the words we use or how often we do so, whenever we remind our kids (and ourselves) of this promise, it's well worth it.

### **Practices**

**Before heading out for the day**, offer a simple blessing by making the sign of the cross and saying: "God goes with you." Or jot down this prayer and tape it to your door: "God, thank you for being with us wherever we go. Keep us healthy and safe today. Amen."

**Practice the Epiphany tradition of "the chalking of the doors,"** which involves writing the dates of the year and the initials of the magi (traditionally Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar) above the door of one's home. Mark your door with the symbols: 20 + C + M + B + 20. Offer this prayer: "God, bless our home. May all who enter here know your love and light and peace. Amen."

*This and other resources for the journey of faith available at [LivingLutheran.org](http://LivingLutheran.org)*

*Kari van Wakeren is a wife, mom, writer and pastor of First Lutheran Church in Alexandria, Minn. Her new book is *Unbalanced but Centered: Tending to Your Heart in the Frenzy of Life*.*

*The Lutheran Church of the Covenant*  
**January 2021**

Server Schedule	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					31 New Year's Eve	1 New Year's Day	2
AG: Sheila Werner, Annie Copeland, Paula Hohenstein	3 9:00 am Epiphany of Our Lord	4	5 7:00 Worship & Music Meeting	6	7	8	9
AG: Sheila Werner, Annie Copeland, Paula Hohenstein	10 9:00 am Baptism of Our Lord	11	12 7:00 Council Meeting	13	14	15	16
AG: Joan Garvin, Marie Zahn, Jen Garberich	17 9:00 am Second Sunday after Epiphany	18	19	20	21	22	23
AG: Joan Garvin, Marie Zahn, Jen Garberich	24 9:00 am Third Sunday after Epiphany	25	26	27	28	29	30
AG: Claudia Senderak, Jean Ruster, Gwen Susaneck	31 9:00-am Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	Feb 1	2	3	4	5	6

# Covenant News

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