

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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January 10, 2021 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Baptism of Our Lord

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Deacon of Word and Service			Sandye Fletcher
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Music Minister			Robert Eaton
Congregational Chair			Curtiss Schonenberg
Creative Child Center Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			O. C. S.
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon

MISSION STATEMENT: Love God, Love Neighbor

VISION STATEMENT: Showing our love of God and neighbor, we will work to double the number of members that are serving as well as those that are being served from 2018 to 2021.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshipping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***

* **This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.**

INTRODUCTION

Our re-creation in baptism is an image of the Genesis creation, where the Spirit of God moved over the waters. Both Mark’s gospel and the story in Acts make clear that it is the Spirit’s movement that distinguishes Jesus’ baptism from John’s. The Spirit has come upon us as upon Jesus and the Ephesians, calling us God’s beloved children and setting us on Jesus’ mission to re-create the world in the image of God’s vision of justice and peace.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

C This earth is yours, O God. You created its riches – the water, the land, the minerals – sufficient resources for all your children’s needs. We confess that we are not good stewards of all you have placed in our care. Too often we think of ourselves first and only.

P Creator God, forgive us.

Men *We are short-sighted and selfish with your gifts, squandering today what needs saving for tomorrow,*

Women *hoarding “ours” instead of sharing what is yours, refusing to use some gifts at all.*

C Gracious One, forgive us.

P We seek comfort and security for ourselves at the expense of bare essentials for others.

C Show us your way, Lord, to bring Good News to the poor.

Women *We refuse to be swept into the whirlwind of your Spirit that will challenge and change us.*

Men *We object, complaining that we have challenge and change enough that disrupts our lives.*

P We look for reasons to reject new ways to respond to your Word.

C O Breath of God, breathe fire into us again!

P Fill us with the transforming power of your love.

C Show us new ways to respond to your Gospel. Challenge and equip us to turn our compassion into action for all of your children who suffer. Amen.

P “Comfort my people,” says our God. “Comfort them! Tell them they have suffered long enough and their sins are now forgiven. Come to me and you will live.” (Isaiah 40:1-2; Amos 5:12)

GOSPEL SONG: GREAT ARE YOU, LORD

**You give life, You are love, You bring light to the darkness.
You give hope, You restore ev’ry heart that is broken.
And great are You, Lord.**

CHORUS:

It’s Your breath in our lungs, so we pour out our praise, pour out our praise!

It’s Your breath in our lungs, so we pour out our praise to You only.

CCLI Song # 6460220 Words and Music by David Leonard, Jason Ingram, and Leslie Jordan © 2012 Integrity’s Alleluia! Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (Integrity Music, David C Cook)) Integrity’s Praise! Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (Integrity Music, David C Cook)) Open Hands Music (Admin. By Essential Music Publishing LLC) So Essential Tunes (Admin. by Essential Publishing LLC) CCLI License # 1729377

GOSPEL: Mark 1:4-11

Mark’s gospel reports the story of Jesus’ baptism with some irony: the one on whom the Spirit descends is himself the one who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit.

A The holy gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 1, verses 4-11.

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." ⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

GOSPEL SONG: GREAT ARE YOU, LORD
You give life, You are love, You bring light to the darkness.
You give hope, You restore ev'ry heart that is broken.
And great are You, Lord.

CHORUS:
It's Your breath in our lungs, so we pour out our praise, pour out our praise!
It's Your breath in our lungs, so we pour out our praise to You only.

BRIDGE:
All the earth will shout Your praise. Our hearts will cry,
These bones will sing, "Great are You, Lord!"
All the earth will shout Your praise. Our hearts will cry,
These bones will sing, "Great are You, Lord!"

CHORUS TWICE
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SERMON

* **SERMON SONG: BAPTIZED**

CHORUS:
Baptized into the death of Christ and raised again to new life,
Baptized into the death of Christ and raised again to new life!

Down, down, down, I was sinking deep in sin,
Killing me, killing me from deep within.
He put me to death that day,
And the family of God stood up to say... *CHORUS*

Down, down, down, in the water, down I went.
Lifted up in a brand new covenant!
They made the sign on my brow,
And I'll do it again to remember now...

CHORUS:
Baptized into the death of Christ and raised again to new life,
Baptized into the death of Christ and raised again to new life!

Sing, sing, sing to the ones who have not heard.
We've been washed in the water and the word!
We'll sing with every breath!
We will share His life like we shared His death...

CHORUS

Words and Music by Jay Beech © 1988 Baytone Music

* APOSTLES' CREED

A With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
C **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)

PRAYERS

A Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray for the church throughout the world and its leaders, that guided by the Holy Spirit they proclaim the forgiveness of sins.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray for wilderness and water, wind and wild beasts, and all living things on earth, that God's goodness is revealed through creation and faithful stewards care for all God has made.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray for the nations of the world and their leaders, for laborers busy both day and night, and for peacemakers amid strife, that God inspire all people to use their strength wisely.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray for the congregation gathered here, for students returning to school, for those seeking renewal in their daily work, that all the beloved of God experience grace and peace.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray for the family and friends of Mabel Krenek who passed away this past week, that you be with them and comfort them during this difficult time.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray for those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Neil Frederick; Ronnie Rogers; Sandy Cherniss; Alma Larmer; Gunther Haller; Ophelia Vasquez; Tiger Bergfeld; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray for those battling cancer that they may know healing and comfort. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Jo Ann Moeller; Lily Presswood; Denise Lange; Cliff Grohmann; Doug Mason; Wanda Sutton; Fran Gillett; Dr. Tom Hancher; Stanley Yearwood; Joe Berry; Joyce Templeton; Tim Dahlstrom; Gracie Brune; Margaret Rogers; Leonard Kahlden; Curtis Wallin; Harvey Skow; Megan Burch; Jennifer Aleman; Lisa Grazier; Phyllis Behrend; Bill Stolle; Jamie Stokes; Jessica Mauchlen; Larry Guthrie; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Tina Barten; Anthony Baumbach; Cindy Masek; Denver Meyer; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; Joe Hluchanek; Devon Tiffin; Stanley King; Monty Gillett; Dawn Foster; Amber Smith; Edward Halcolm; Alison Randazzo; Amber Kutach; Louis Camacho; Melvin Schobel; Janet Greene; Sabrina Galindo; Debbie Grimes; Horst Traub; Margie Fisk; Preston Carter; Penny Miller; Carl Hahn; Megan Cain; Bob Rutta; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; and Brenda Baker.

A Let us pray for all expectant mothers that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Hannah Pavlicek; Kelsey Maertz Zapalac; Courtney Busselman; Chandler Divin; Kelsey McNeely; and Angela Gorman; Dasha Lukina-Kopecky.

A Let us pray for those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Coy Dell Schindler; R. O. (Reuben) Barten; Clemons Venghaus; Deanna Lee; Dolores Wessels; Alma Larmer; Doris Poppe; Bill Rodgers; Barbara McMath; Linda Munos Rodgers; Judy Brisco; Barbara Prause; Lou Cordes; Madeline Menke; Adeline Spross; Doris Horndt;

Helen Perrard; Delores Purcell; Curtis Berger; Marjorie Brune; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Beatrice Zikuhr; Robert Eaton; James Booker; Adrian Fritsch; Don Morrison; and Sylvia Marburger.

A For all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel that they are protected and kept safe. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*
Law enforcement officers: Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Marley Mayo; Johnny Kovar; Abbigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Andrew Lattimore; Luke Kanz; Bruno Flores; Jessica Dimas; Zane Weido; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Randy Neuendorff; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Garrett Flores; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette, as well as those active duty military members including Jeanna Willettz; Arturo Mares; Keven Rios; Michael Graham; Brian Anderson; Landon Cheatham; Bryan Kubena; Brad Bergfeld; Cody Jowers; Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Ryan Neisner; Anthony D'Angelo; Dalton Kapel; Kindra Dawson; and William Phillips.

A We pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregation, Cristo Rey in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

A brief silence.

A Let us pray in thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now rest from their labors, that their witness inspire us in our baptismal vocations.

A brief silence.

A Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

C Amen.

*** PEACE**

P As Jesus shared peace, let us also share His peace with one another. *(Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)*

(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)

PRESENTATION OF OUR GIFTS

“Power of One” is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These “Power of One” dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.

* OFFERING PRAYER

P O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace.

C Amen.

* REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS

* LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

* INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Beloved: here is bread; here is wine. Here is Jesus. Come and be fed.

C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Continuous with Individual Cups)

{Distribution will be continuous. Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Please keep 6 feet between those who are not your family members. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor “Gluten-free, please.” Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}

* PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P Christ Jesus, at this table we have feasted on your very life and are strengthened for our journey. Send us forth from this communion service nourished in body and in spirit to proclaim your good news and serve others in your name.

C Amen.

* BLESSING

P God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter
✠ keep you in peace.

C Amen.

* CLOSING SONG: HOLY WATER (YOUR FORGIVENESS)

**God, I’m on my knees again, God, I’m beggin’ please again.
I need You. Oh, I need You. Walking down these desert roads,
Water for my thirsty soul. I need You. Oh, I need You.**

CHORUS:

***Your forgiveness... is like sweet, sweet honey on my lips!
It’s like the sound of a symphony to my ears!
It’s like holy water on my skin...***

**Dead man walkin’, slave to sin. I wanna know about bein’ born again,
I need You. Oh, God, I need You.
So take me to the river side, take me under, baptize!
I need You. Oh, God, I need You. CHORUS**

BRIDGE x3

**I don’t wanna abuse Your grace. God, I need it every day!
It’s the only thing that ever really makes me wanna change.**

REPEAT CHORUS

LAST CHORUS

**Your forgiveness... Oh, is like sweet, sweet honey on my lips!
It’s like the sound of a symphony to my ears! It’s like holy water
Your forgiveness. . . Oh, is like sweet, sweet honey on my lips!
It’s like the sound of a symphony to my ears!
Oh, it’s like holy water on my skin...**

TAG END:

**Yeah, it’s like holy water on my skin,
Yeah, it’s like holy water...**

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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace baptized by the Holy Spirit.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: John, Terri & Chase Brasher; Ron & Mary Ann Peirsol

LAY READER: Adam Torres

ACOLYTE: Brook David

ALTAR GUILD: Peggy Geisler

WELCOME: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1): sky, waters, ground; sun, moon, stars; plants, animals, people. Then God rested. So, welcome to this time for rest and worship.

We extend our Christian sympathy to the family and friends of Mabel Krenek who passed away this past week. May God comfort them during their time of loss.

COLLECTION OF OFFERING: Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes “Power of One” dollars.

Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses: \$8,405.00

Attendance: Thurs., Dec. 24, 2020 – 226 **Contributions:** Thurs., Dec. 24 – \$7,998.00

Power of One: Thurs., Dec. 24, 2020 – \$136.00

Attendance: Dec. 26, 2020 – 24

Contributions: Dec. 26 – \$5,894.15

Power of One: Dec. 26, 2020 – \$14.00

Campaign Fund: Dec. 26 - \$255.00

Attendance: Jan. 2 & 3, 2021 – 115

Contributions: Jan. 2 & 3 – \$11,824.85

Power of One: Jan. 2 & 3, 2021 – \$40.00

Campaign Fund: Jan. 2 & 3 - \$2,525.00

Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Jan. 6 – **52 Total**

BLAST/Confirmation: 43

Support Staff: 9

ATTENTION: *Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.*

♦ **GLUTEN-FREE WAFERS:** For those who are allergic to gluten, we will have a few gluten-free wafers available at communion. Please tell Pastor when coming forward, “Gluten-free, please.”

** **NOTICE REGARDING BULLETINS:** Please take your bulletin home after worship. If you do not wish to take your bulletin home, please place it in the recycling container after worship. We will **not** be reusing them. Thank you! **

** **Get the new year off to a good start! 2021 Pocket Calendars** are available for you to pick up in the narthex and church office for your use. They are a gift from the Evangelism Team. Enjoy!

► **2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES ARE HERE!!!** Please check the coat area of the narthex for your 2021 offering envelope boxes. You can also take the box of a family member, friend or neighbor and deliver it to them. That would be appreciated very much! The boxes are in alphabetical order. Thank you!

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Mon., Jan. 11 – 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting

Tues., Jan. 12 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM – Quilters (fellowship hall)

12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)

5:30 PM – Stewardship Team (library)

Wed., Jan. 13 – 9:00 AM – CCC Chapel

5:00 PM – Confirmation Class (fellowship hall)

5:30 PM – BLAST (youth center)

6:00 PM – High School Youth (youth center)

Thurs., Jan. 14 – Sandye & Stephanie have Continuing Education (via Zoom)

5:00 PM – Worship Team (fellowship hall)

6:00 PM – Church Council (fellowship hall)

Sat., Jan. 16 – 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Jan. 17 – 9:00 AM - Holy Communion Worship

10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School & Confirmation

11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Friday, January 15, 2021 Martin Luther King Jr., renewer of society, martyr, died 1968

An American prophet of justice among races and nations, King was an eloquent preacher, a leader of the nonviolent resistance to race-segregated society, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Born on this date, he was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

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OTHER READINGS: Genesis 1:1-5

Out of chaos, God brings order. Out of the formless void, God brings light. This familiar story

was good news for the Israelites, who experienced much chaos in their history. It remains good news for us. God created and continues to create new life.

The reading begins:

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

PSALM: Psalm 29

¹Ascribe to the LORD, you gods, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ²Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God’s name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. ³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is upon the mighty waters. ⁴The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice; the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor. ⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon; ⁶the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox. ⁷The voice of the LORD bursts forth in lightning flashes. ⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. ⁹The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare. And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, “Glory!” ¹⁰The LORD sits enthroned above the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore. ¹¹O LORD, give strength to your people; give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

OTHER READINGS: Acts 19:1-7

In Ephesus, Paul encounters people who had received John’s baptism of repentance but had never heard of the Holy Spirit or of baptism in the name of Jesus. After Paul baptizes them, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and empowers them with gifts of the Spirit.

The reading begins:

¹While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ²He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³Then he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They answered, “Into John’s baptism.” ⁴Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied — ⁷altogether there were about twelve of them.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: JESUS’ BAPTISM - BREATH OF GOD

We see references to breath regularly in Scripture. God’s breath (Spirit) hovers over the chaos in creation in Genesis. Breath or Spirit enters the nostrils of the created in the story. Breath and Spirit is breathed onto the disciples by Jesus when he appears to them after his resurrection. In the gospel text, as Jesus rises from the waters, the Spirit, the breath of God, descends like a

dove. Jesus, having held his breath under the water, rises as a model of death and life for us, breathing in the life of the Spirit. He is arisen and claimed by God as the beloved with whom God is pleased.

Of course, breathing is both things: breathing *in* and breathing *out*. You can hold your breath, but there is no way to hold it forever. Consider how this reflects the Spirit’s power in Jesus and then in our baptism. In baptism, the gift is not just one of repentance and forgiveness, but, as the Acts text emphasizes, also involves the Spirit living and acting in the baptized. While it is a gift for our own lives, like the gift of breathing *in*, it is also encouragement and life, a breathing *out* of the Spirit into the world. Baptism is both for our own sake and for the sake of the world. In our baptism, we breathe *in* forgiveness and reconciliation and breathe *out* the Spirit in our life and works. That’s the full life of the baptized disciple.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

At Jesus’ baptism, Jesus hears the voice of God, receives the Spirit of God, and is acclaimed Son of God. For Christians, this narrative illumines Christian baptism, when believers are adopted as children by the name of the triune God. Welcome to worship! This story is also about us: we too have been baptized, we have heard God’s loving call, and we have received the Holy Spirit.

In this new year, we are called into the Spirit of our baptismal life with our post-Christmas worship telling the story of Jesus’s baptism. In the church, our life as Christians begins with baptism. In the reading from Acts Paul explains the difference between John’s baptism of repentance and the baptism Paul proclaims. For Paul, baptism is about the gifts God chooses to impart through the water and the word. The focus is not on the individual who seeks repentance, the focus is on God, the giver of all good things.

Consider the timing of these words to Jesus. “And a voice came from heaven, ‘*You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.*’” This is before Jesus’ public ministry begins. Jesus has not recruited a single disciple. There is no mention yet of him preaching, teaching, or healing anyone. You might say he has done nothing to make the one speaking from above well pleased. Yet this is the powerful love of God poured down from above through baptism. The grace extended to Jesus extends to all God’s children: one and all are beloved of God.

The Holy Spirit has a central role in all the readings for this day. It is the Holy Spirit in the form of the wind of God moving over the waters in creation, it is the gift of the Holy Spirit Paul celebrates in baptism, and it is the Spirit who descends in the form of a dove on Jesus as he is baptized. How can you see, feel, touch, or otherwise experience the Holy Spirit blowing as a wind or descending as a dove into your life or the life of your community? Have you heard stories when people were so excited and certain because God’s Spirit was doing a new thing in their midst? Have you personally ever experienced The Spirit “move”? Share your story! Go tell it!

KID STUDY:

The new year is here! We celebrate and have fun when the calendar hits January 1st. Many people think of New Year’s Day as a new beginning because for them, it’s an exciting chance to start over. A time to try to do things better. Today, we’ll talk about another new beginning. It’s better than the beginning of a new year. It’s the beginning of a new life; a new life in Jesus. In the Bible, we read about a man called John the Baptist. John went all around the countryside in Judea telling people about a new beginning they could have. He said to repent. That means to ask God to forgive your sins, turn away from those sins, and try again. John baptized people who repented. He did it in the river Jordan. They were baptized to show the world that God had forgiven their sins. This was a new beginning for them. Even Jesus himself went to John the Baptist and was baptized by him.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

You were led to the holy pool of divine baptism. And each of you was asked, whether you believed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You made that saving confession, and descended three times into the water, and ascended again—here also, in a hidden and figurative way, pointing at the three-day burial of Christ. For as our Savior passed three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, so you also, in your first ascent out of the water, represented the first day of Christ in the earth, and by your descent, the night. For as they who are in the night see no more, but they who are in the day remain in the light, so in descending you saw nothing, as in the night, but in ascending again, we were as in the day. Let no one suppose that baptism is merely the grace of remission of sins, as was John’s baptism. No: baptism conveys to us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and God, who has presented you, as it were, alive from the dead, is able to grant you to walk in newness of life. - Cyril of Jerusalem [Cyril of Jerusalem, Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, ed. F. L. Cross (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977), 60-63]

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Next Week’s Theme (January 16 & 17): Come and See

Next Week’s Scriptures (January 16 & 17):

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]

“The calling of Samuel.”

Psalm: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

“You have searched me out and known me.” (Ps. 139:1)

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

“Glorify God in your body.”

Gospel: John 1:43-51

“The calling of the first disciples.”