

COME TO THE STILL WATERS
& REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISM

A Devotions and Activities Booklet for Baptism





Thank You from Intern Quentin

A Lutheran pastor once told me that internship is where the ‘rubber meets the road’ because we as interns get to apply all of the theology and discussions into practical ministry. This time on internship has been an extraordinary time of ‘rubber meeting the road,’ filled with opportunities of learning and growth. And as I thought about that, I think it’s in the waters of our baptism where the ‘rubber meets the road’ in our faith life. Because it’s in those waters that we are baptized, that God pours out for us all of God’s immeasurable love and grace. And it’s here that God raises us with Christ to share all of that love and grace in a world filled with our strangers and our foreigners and our friends and our enemies just as Christ did for us. So, as you flip through and read the devotions and activities in this booklet, I hope that they help you see where might the ‘rubber hit the road’ in your faith life with God and neighbor.

I would also like to thank the people who helped me put the entire project together. Anna Surace, my wife and partner, who has supported and discussed ideas for this project and for this internship with me. My professors and classmates of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary who helped me approach our faith life with God with a bigger lens. Pastor Steve Wood who guided me to the best direction of putting the whole project together. The members of my Internship Committee who have supported me throughout my internship process with positive critiques to grow and affirmations to keep doing what I’m doing. Michelle Wood who helped me format the booklet into Publisher. Jamie Baker who filmed me doing the science experiments, posted them online, and provided QR codes to scan and access them from the booklet. The volunteers who read and reflected on the scriptures to offer to the congregation their thoughts about what baptism, faith, and God mean to them in their lives. The congregation of St. Paul Borchers who opened their doors to Anna and me to learn, grow, and figure out this thing we call church and ministry. Thank you all so much, and peace and blessings be with you all. Happy remembering.

– Quentin Surace
Pastoral Intern, St. Paul Borchers 2023-2024



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SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

Genesis 1:1-5

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

For as long as I can remember, the creation story has always been my favorite piece of scripture. I absolutely love the imagery and the detailed account of the story, and I have always been fascinated by how all of the pieces of creation fit together. However, it wasn't until I contemplated these verses that I realized that the creation story can be a metaphor for baptism. As verse two points out, the world started without form, and it was empty and dark. Then, God spoke, and created light. But something happened before God created light. Something that can be easy to miss when reading these verses. Before God spoke light into existence, he moved upon the face of the waters. Once God worked through the waters, he proceeded to create light, and all of the other things that make our world so spectacular. God's movement through the water prompted him to remake the dark, desolate world into something new. A world with water, animals, stars, and plants that were designed to bear good fruit and spread seeds. He also created man. And just as the Lord made the world new by moving through the waters, God makes us new by moving through the waters of baptism. As we are washed by the living water, by the Holy Spirit, we are made new as children of God, and called to bear the good fruits of the Spirit and plant seeds of faith.

—Erin Otte



Exodus 17:1-7

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

Just as the people of Israel, I am also on a journey and I often times find myself in a wilderness. I would imagine that you can relate. Differences exist between us and the people of Israel; however, similarities do as well. We grumble and frequently question God, asking why He does what He does. God's response is the same. In His perfect love, He continually provides what is needed by His children. RENEWAL. For the people of Israel, He provided the gift of water through the rock at Horeb. Our renewal is through the waters of baptism. God claims us through baptism in which His full presence is in, under and with the water. God's grace flows over us and all believers through this water and through Christ's blood, which was shed when He laid down His life. Our journey continues in grace.

—Chris Otte



Psalm 42:1-2


Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

This has become one of my favorite songs since my foreign exchange student, Lene, loved to hear it any time I sat down at the piano. She came to America from Germany to learn about our culture and to become emersed in our life. Then only fifteen days after she arrived, I totaled my car ending up five months not walking.

The lady who arranged the home stays for the students asked Lene if she wanted to move to a different host family. Lene said, “No.” Instead, Lene wanted to be where the church community took such good care of me. She was seeing the baptism of living waters being lived out by friends and neighbors.

Sometimes we have to be in a “drought” to know how much the living waters are needed. Let’s remember that as we need water, we also need the living waters.

—Olga Otte



Psalm 63:1-4

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

In my version of the Bible, an introduction says David wrote this when he was in the Desert of Judah. Imagine, David is in the desert, he cries out saying “my soul thirsts for you.” He is physically and spiritually thirsty. He desires to be with God. David feels thirsty, dry, tired and lonely. David remembers that he has seen what God can do and stands in awe of His power and glory. Because David feels God’s love, he vows to praise and glorify God for the rest of his life. Sometimes we feel like we’re in a physical and spiritual desert as well. When I think of this passage in terms of my baptism, I am thankful for being a child of God. This passage reminds me that God is the water that quenches my spiritual thirst. Each day, I should desire to walk with Him and live out His purpose for me. I’m not always going to remember to do this, or necessarily do a good job – but I can try each day. Without Him, my soul too would thirst and I would feel something was missing. When we remember our baptism, it should remind us that God is sustaining and life-giving. Wow! When we think of everything God has done for us, no wonder we want to praise Him. We need God as much, or more, than we need actual water. Each day is a new day to do what the words of the baptismal liturgy say: “to live among God’s faithful people, hear the word of God, proclaim the good news of God in Christ in word and deed, and serve all people following Jesus’ example and strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”

–Michelle Wood



Matthew 8:23-27

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Just like the disciples in the boat, I too, have found myself in many storms. And, just like the disciples, I have found myself crying out to Jesus for help in finding the calm in the storm. I see the water at work in this passage by sweeping over the disciples and drenching them, much like in my baptism. Even though the disciples were scared, Jesus was with them in the waters of the storm, just like he is with us the waters of our baptism. I give thanks that Jesus is with me in my stormy waters too, not just in the water of my baptism.

—Mandy Otte



John 4:7-15

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

The Samaritan woman asked the hard questions of faith: “Why are you different, Judean? Where is this well of which you speak?” God rewarded her, overlooked her past, and held out hope for her future. In baptism, we are rewarded with unending grace, freedom in faith, and a life with hope. When others are carried away by the earthly necessities of life, take a moment to rest and accept those you find along the way. Their needs, whether inter-personal or merely for survival, can be a bridge — a common bond, one we share with our Creator. A child singing the tune in her heart can mend the pain in my own — if I am willing to listen. The grief of a friend might be lessened — if I ask, “How are you today?” That rock might become the foundation of a new future — if I trust grace in the hard place.

—Evan Tangman



Acts 8:26-40

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

Any time I reflect on the sacrament of baptism, I remember that in this simple ceremony God accepts use into a relationship with Him, Jesus, and the whole universe of believers. What a wonderful resource we can rely on. I also acknowledge that baptism is a gift. It is a gift of God, an act of adoption, acceptance, promised forgiveness and, most of all, Love.

Now as a child of God, I am called to “...live among God’s faithful people, share in the Lord’s Supper, proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following Christ’s example and strive for justice and peace in all the earth...”

Growing up, I never expected to spend most of my days living in Indiana. But I prayed and listened and followed where God led me, and here I have flourished. He has guided me to serve in multiple ways in this congregation and outside it. Just as Philip was called to travel on a desert road, he was unsure of what to expect – God had a plan. I was called to Indiana and did not know what to expect – God had a plan.

Remember fondly your baptism. It may have occurred a while ago, but God had a plan and he still has a plan. Pray, listen and expect the unexpected.

–Kendall Alstatt



Acts 10:44-48

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

When I was a child, watching television, these words suddenly appeared on the screen: “We interrupt this program to bring you this important message.” That was “a public service announcement.” In Acts, we see The Spirit crossing all human borders. God frequently interrupts structures, plans and programs. God’s freely given love interrupts our methods and confronts our prejudices. The inclusion of gentiles in the house of faith was not the human plan; but it was God’s plan. The thirst for God’s grace is a need that all human beings share in common. The waters of grace flow everywhere, connecting every person, tribe and nation. God’s love will interrupt our practices and plans. Henri Nouwen once said: “Interruptions of your ministry are your ministry.” Put these words on your desk or on your dashboard. “Interruptions of my ministry are my ministry.” That is a public service announcement.

—Larry Isbell



1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

In baptism we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are made clean and placed in God's hands. God is always with us along life's pathway because we are his children and will be saved eternally through the love of God. He will be our guide if we put our trust in him to lead us along life's journey and provide us with our daily needs.

God is with us through our storms of life - through sickness, sorrow, grief and loneliness. My confirmation hymn was "Oh, Take my Hand Dear Father and Lead Thou Me... do thou guide my foot steps on life's rough way."

God sends to us angels, in the love and kindness of our fellow believers, who help us through those times of need. Just as God guided the footsteps of Moses, he is guiding us throughout our lives.

"Then take my hand dear father and lead thou me, till at my journey's ending, I dwell with thee. Amen"

—Karen Wiesehan



Hebrews 10:21-22

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

Reflecting on the elements of water in the passage, "... having our bodies washed with pure water." I am reminded of my baptism. I was marked by the cross of Christ forever. God works through water in baptism to wash us clean, to forgive and to love us. As our mothers bathed us when we were babies, so are we washed clean in the water of baptism.

The passage also has the words "...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart..." Our attitude when we approach God can reflect how our hearts and minds are. If we are filled with chaos and random thoughts when we draw near to God, then our hearts can be sprinkled to cleanse us.

Water as cleansing, water as forgiveness and water as life-giving. Once we are forgiven and clean, we are able to live freely.

—Ruth Ann Hendrix



Revelation 22: 1-3

Please read Bible Passage before reflection.

The Book of Revelation reminds me of darkness and the world's end. However, I had a different opinion after reading Revelation 22: 1-3. The three verses touched my heart and reminded me of God's Promise. The promise is that we will have eternal life free from suffering and no more hate we live with daily.

God is portrayed as the ultimate source of the water of life. The passage describes a crystal clear river flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, indicating that God is the origin of all life and sustenance. This imagery highlights God's role as the provider of His creation, offering spiritual nourishment and renewal to those who partake of the water of life.

The water of life is described as clear as crystal, symbolizing purity and healing. God's presence brings about spiritual healing and restoration, washing away sin and bringing wholeness to His people. Through the water of life, God demonstrates His compassion and desire to restore humanity to righteousness and perfection.

The imagery of the river and the tree of life echoes the imagery found in the Garden of Eden, symbolizing the restoration of God's original plan for creation. God's presence fulfills His promises of redemption and renewal, offering eternal life and communion with Him to those who believe.

Overall, God is portrayed as actively at work in Revelation 22:1-3, manifesting His presence, power and grace through the imagery of the water of life and the throne of God. The passage underscores God's role as the source of all life, the healer of humanity's brokenness and the fulfillment of His promises of salvation and restoration.

—Brandy Schafstall



SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

Sins Can't Weigh Us Down

What's Needed: Tall drinking glass or clear jar, water, food coloring dye (lighter colors work best), cooking oil, salt

Instructions:

1. Fill the glass with about 3 inches of water. For a more colorful experience, add food coloring dye of your choice
2. Pour in about 1 inch of cooking oil (vegetable or corn oil; olive oil doesn't work well).
3. Sprinkle salt over the glass and see what happens.

How it works: If you've ever heard that water and oil never mix, the reason why is because oil is a less dense liquid than water. This is called immiscible (they don't mix). So, the oil rests on top of the water, and even if the two liquids are mixed, they will separate over time. When the salt is sprinkled over the oil, the salt grains sink to the bottom of the glass and bring blobs of oil with them. However, once the salt dissolves fully in the water, the oil is released and floats back up to the top.

Faith Connection: When we talk about baptism, we talk a lot about our sins being washed away. But what are sins? Well, sins are things that everyone does that normally isn't kind, loving or helpful to ourselves or our neighbors (the people around us in the world). And just like the salt weighs down the oil in this experiment, our sins can build up over time and weigh us down too, which can make it hard to love ourselves and others. But, just as the water dissolves the salt releasing the oil, the waters of our baptism have dissolved our sins releasing us into a new life with God. And even though we won't always be kind, loving or helpful to our neighbor, our baptism frees us to try again each and every day.



God's Reactive Love


What's Needed: Empty plastic bottle, dry yeast, warm water (110°F), liquid dish soap, 3% hydrogen peroxide, measuring cups, measuring spoons, large tub or tray or sink to catch the foam, food coloring dye (optional),

Instructions:

1. Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ Cup of hydrogen peroxide, and carefully pour it into the bottle.
2. Add a big squirt of dish soap into the bottle, and swirl gently to mix. For a more colorful experience, add a few drops of food coloring dye, and swirl gently to mix.
3. In a measuring cup, mix one tablespoon of yeast and three tablespoons of warm water (approx. 110°F). Stir for about 30 seconds.
4. Pour yeast mixture into the bottle, and make sure to keep the bottle in the tub/tray/sink to catch the liquid, and see what happens.

How it works: When hydrogen peroxide comes into contact with the yeast, it breaks down into water and oxygen. Oxygen is a gas that wants to escape the liquid mix but it cannot because of the dish soap. So, what happens is the dish soap traps the oxygen resulting in lots of gas bubbles that creates the foam you see now. As long as there is hydrogen peroxide and yeast, the reaction will continue to happen until one or both run out in the mixture.

Faith Connection: In our baptism, we talk about how we receive God's full and unconditional love. But how much love is that if we tried to measure it? Well, like this reaction that will keep creating foam as long as there is hydrogen peroxide and yeast, God's full and unconditional love will never stop because God's grace is infinite.



Gathered up by the Spirit


What's Needed: Shallow bowl or saucer, tea light or small candle, water, food dye (optional), matches or lighter, drinking glass

Instructions:

1. Pour about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of water in the dish. For a more colorful experience, mix in a couple of drops of food coloring dye.
2. Place the candle in the middle of the dish and light it with the match.
3. Place the glass upside-down over the candle and see what happens.

How it works: So what's happening in this experiment is that as the air molecules in the glass heat up, they expand, which increases the pressure inside the glass. When the candle goes out, the molecules cool and the pressure drops again, so that it's less than the air pressure outside the glass. Because pressure always wants to equalize, the higher air pressure outside "pushes" the water up and into the glass where the pressure is lower. It may do this with such force that the water actually bubbles. At the same time, because twice as much oxygen is burned as carbon dioxide released during combustion, the gas volume decreases. This also has the effect of reducing the overall pressure inside the glass, causing the water to be sucked into it.

Faith Connection: Just as the water is gathered into the glass, God gathers us together each Sunday to worship with each other. And just as the water leaves when the glass is removed, God also sends us out into the world to spread the love and kindness that God shares and gives to us.



Bag O' Trust

What's Needed: zip-top bag of water, sharpened pencil

Instructions:

1. Fill zip-top bag with water to at least halfway
2. Take sharpened pencil and slowly puncture one side of the zip-top bag of water
3. Push the sharpened pencil through the zip-top bag of water and puncture the opposite side of the zip-top bag of water
4. Leave the sharpened pencil in the bag (DO NOT REMOVE sharpened pencil until ready to empty bag of water)

How it works: The zip-top back is made from a chemical compound called a polymer. The polymer is made up of microscopic molecular chains that close around the sharpened pencil when the bag is pierced. Because of this, no water will leak from the holes in the bag because they have been sealed up by these molecular chains.

Faith Connection: As the people of God flee from Egypt in the Book of Exodus, we read how God holds back the waters of the Red Sea to make a path for the people of God. The people experience in this moment that they can always turn to God for help and trust that God will help them when they are in need. We see in this science experiment how the plastic polymers hold the water in and that we can trust that the water will not leak out onto us.

In our lives today, God continues to work in this same way for us through the waters of our baptism. Because it's in our baptism that we remember to turn to God when we are in need of help and forgiveness and that God is always there to help us when we are in need.



God Makes our Sins Disappear!

What's Needed: Small Jar (Preferably with a lid, so that you can shake it), water, food coloring dye, bleach

Instructions:

1. Fill the small jar with water about halfway.
2. Add a few drops of food coloring dye to the water, and swirl gently to mix.
3. Carefully, add a little bleach to the jar.
4. Seal jar with lid (flip upside down over a sink to make sure that the lid is secure), and gently swirl the mixture of water and bleach around to see what happens next.

How it works: What happens is that the food coloring dye disappears in the water mixture because bleach contains sodium hypochlorite, which is an oxidizer. The bleach reacts with the color molecules in the food coloring dye. Although the pigment molecule remains, it's shape changes causing it not to absorb/reflect light the same way as before, thus losing its color.

Faith Connection: One thing we always learn and talk about is that in the waters of our baptism, God washes away our sins. But what does that mean to wash away our sins? Well, when we are born, we are born into a world of sins, a world filled with things that are not loving, kind or helpful, and that causes us to not be loving, kind or helpful. But what God does in our baptism is that God washes those things away and makes us clean, just like the bleach washes away the food coloring dye in the water. And while we may not always be loving, kind and helpful in our lives, we remember in the waters of our baptism that God has washed away our sins so that we can try again in the world today.



Raised with Christ


What's Needed: water, drinking glass, ice cube, embroidery thread or string, salt

Instructions:

1. Fill the glass with water and drop in an ice cube (for a more colorful experience, use food coloring dye)
2. Lay the thread or string across the top of the ice cube.
3. Sprinkle the ice cube with salt and wait a few seconds.
4. Try to lift the ice cube using the thread. Can you?

How it works: When you pour salt on an ice cube, it dissolves into the water of the ice. Saltwater freezes at a lower temperature than the temperature at which freshwater freezes, so the ice melts. But the coldness of the ice cube refreezes the water, putting a layer of ice over the thread and trapping it. You can lift the ice cube right out of the water.

Faith Connection: When we think about baptism, it's easiest to think about it like a special, one time bath where God washes away all of our sins. But there are other things that happen in the waters of our baptism. One of these is that in the waters of our baptism we die with Christ on the Cross and rise with Christ out of the Tomb to new life (Romans 6, Colossians 2: 12-13). And when we go through that dying and rising throughout our lives as we remember that God always loves and forgives us. Just as we can raise the ice cube out of the water, God raises us every day to go out and live out our baptism to love God and love our neighbor as ourself.



To the Edges of the Bowl

What's Needed: three toothpicks, a clean bowl, dish soap.

Instructions:

1. Fill the clean bowl with water and let it settle for a few minutes.
2. Carefully, place the toothpicks on the top. Try and get them to form a triangle.
3. Once the toothpicks have formed their triangle, drop a few drops of the dish soap into the center of the toothpick triangle and see what happens.

How it works: So what happens in this experiment is that we broke the surface tension of the water. When water sits in a container, the water molecules below the surface are pulled together equally in all directions, but those molecules on the top are pulled together more tightly. This draws them together to form a kind of “skin” that we call surface tension. When we add the dish soap, we break the arrangement of the water molecules, decreasing the surface tension inside the triangle of toothpicks. The water molecules move from areas of low surface tension to high surface tension, and so the sticks move.

Faith Connection: Part of our baptism is that God brings all of us together as part of God’s family, which we live out in our church families. But it’s also in our baptism that God sends us out into the world to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. At the end of the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus tells his baptized disciples to go and “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them” in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and “teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19-20). Just as the dish soap broke the surface tension sending the toothpicks to the edge of the bowl, God sends us to the ends of the Earth to share this good news of who Jesus is and to share the love and grace that God gives to us through our baptism.



Toothpicks to Form One Body

What's Needed: 5 wooden toothpicks, dropper or a drinking straw, water, saucer

Instructions:

1. Bend the toothpicks in the middle but do not break them completely.
2. Place the five bent toothpicks in a circle on the saucer with the broken points touching one another.
3. Carefully, put some drops of water in the middle using the dropper or straw and see what happens (This one takes a little time to fully come together, so make sure to be patient as the experiment starts reacting)

How it works: When dry wood absorbs the water, the bent wood fibers expand and unbend. As the toothpicks straighten out, they push against one another opening up the inside of a star shape. The wood is able to do this because of a capillary action, adhesion and cohesion. These are the same factors that allow plants to carry water from the roots upward through vein-like tubes to the leaves.

Faith Connection: Something that happens when we get baptized is that we join the family of God. Now the family of God takes people from all walks of life and draws them together to become one big church family. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul described the church as “one body” all brought together through our own baptisms in Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 12-13, 27). Just as the water brings these toothpicks together to form one star, God brings us together from throughout the world to be the church in the world today, to go and love God and love our neighbor as ourself.



Where is the Water Pointing Us?

What's Needed: Pitcher of water, glass with saucer, waxed paper, sewing needles, small magnet

Instructions:

1. Cut 1-inch circles from the waxed paper.
2. Fill the glass with water to the top.
3. Magnetize (turn into a magnet) the needle by (carefully) rubbing the magnet on the needle 20 or 30 times in the same direction.
4. Determine which way is North in relation to where you're doing the experiment.
5. Poke the needle in and out of the waxed paper circle. Gently, place it in the glass filled with water so that the waxed paper circle will float on the surface and see what happens.

How it works: A magnet allowed to turn freely will react to the Earth's magnetic field. Since the small magnet wouldn't float on the water, we used the magnet to turn the sewing needle into a magnet in a process called "magnetize." Because the needle can float on the water, it freely turns toward Earth's magnetic North just like a compass does.

Faith Connection: When we go throughout life, it can be easy to get lost with everything going on. And when we get lost, it can be hard to see where God is pointing us or leading us. It's times like these that we can turn back to the words of Jesus who promises to always be with us in the waters of our baptism. Because in these waters of our baptism God is always there to help point us in the right direction, just like this watery compass, to love God and love our neighbor as ourself.




God Pours out Grace and Love

What's Needed: flexible drinking straws, scissors, electrical tape or modeling clay, tall glass or container, shorter glass or container, water, food coloring dye (optional)

Instructions:

1. Fill your tall container to the brim with water and place it next to the shorter container with water. (For a more colorful experience, add food coloring dye)
2. If needed, cut the long end of the straw so it fits into the container, with the flexible part resting on the lip.
3. Place the long end of the straw into the tall container of water. Did anything happen?
4. Now, remove the straw from the water.
5. Place your finger over the short end of the straw.
6. Quickly put the long end of the straw into the tall container, then release your finger, and see what happens.
7. (Optional) Make the Water Syphon Longer. Refill your tall container with water.
8. Cut off the long part of a straw, cutting one end to make a point.
9. Push the point into the short end of another straw.
10. Seal around the connection with tape or modeling clay.
11. Repeat steps 4-6 and see what happens.



How it works: When you put the single straw into the tall container and release your finger, water should shoot up over the top, then start flowing down into the other container. The water will stop flowing once the water level in the tall container reaches the same height as the other end of the straw. When you make a longer siphon (so the end in the short container is underwater instead of suspended in the air), the water will keep flowing until the water levels in the two cups are equal.

Faith Connection: One of the many gifts we receive in our baptism is God's immeasurable love and grace for us. You could say that in the waters of our baptism, God pours that immeasurable love and grace out to us when we are baptized and we receive it daily when we remember that we are loved and forgiven by God. Just as the water siphon pours out the water into the other container, God pours that immeasurable love and grace out to us so that we can share it with the people we meet in our lives today.



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Lectio Divina

What is it? *Lectio Divina* is a spiritual practice done either in a group or done individually in order to listen to the Spirit about a passage from scripture. So, if you use this process, feel free to do it with a group or individually for different perspectives and ideas for your reflection.

How do I do it? The steps to do a modified version of *lectio divina* are listed below. If doing this in a group setting, feel free to let different people read the passage aloud for the three times.

1. Open in prayer asking God for open hearts and minds in this prayer with scripture.
2. Read and Listen to the passage for the first time
 - a. Listen for a word or phrase that God will speak to you today.
 - b. Reflect or pray in silence.
 - c. If in a group, share aloud, or if individually, write down the word or phrase that spoke to your heart.
3. Read and Listen to the passage a second time.
 - a. Reflect or pray in silence on what God might be saying to you through the word or phrase that spoke to your heart.
 - b. If in a group, share aloud, or if individually, write down what the word or phrase means to you.
4. Read and Listen to the passage a third time.
 - a. Reflect or pray in silence on how God may be calling you to act through the word or phrase that spoke to your heart.
 - b. If in a group, share aloud, or if individually, write down how you feel God may be calling you to respond.



5. Close with prayer thanking God for this passage and what has been shared through the passage.

Passages to Meditate On: *Lectio Divina* is a spiritual practice that can be done with any passage from scripture. To get started, here are some passages listed below to meditate with individually and in a group.

- ◆ Psalm 23:1-6 *The Divine Shepherd*

- ◆ Psalm 46:8-11 *God's Defense of His City and People*

- ◆ Mark 1:4-8 *The Proclamation of John the Baptist*

- ◆ Mark 10:46-52 *The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus*

- ◆ Luke 10:38-42 *Jesus Visits Martha and Mary*



Praying with an Icon

What is it? Praying with icons is an ancient practice that involves using natural and supernatural eyes, seeing what the image communicates in both mind and soul. It is not for everyone, but can be a spirit-filling practice for some.

How do I do it? The steps to do a modified version of *praying with icons* are listed below. There is no scripture passage to read for this practice because the Icon *is* the passage like any other translation you can use. Instead of words, the Icon tells us the story with images and symbols. This spiritual practice can be done either individually or in a group setting.

1. **Be unassuming:** Approach an icon with reverence. Simply seek to observe and understand the scene and setting. Icons represent a heavenly presence, and as you pray, you interact with that presence.
2. **Enter the Scene:** Become aware of the truths the icon shows us about the biblical witness.
3. **Meditate:** Where is your eye drawn? Consider how this component touches your life. Spend time allowing your heart to interact with the icon subject.
4. **Listen:** Remain quiet in prayer, listen to where the Spirit is leading you. Don't strive to lead the prayer.
5. **Be grateful:** Offer your needs and aspirations, trusting that they are received and understood. Spend time in the presence of God giving thanks for the experience.

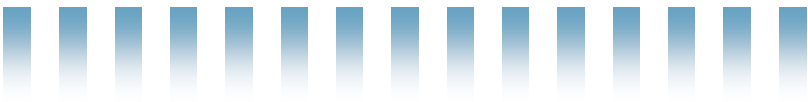
Icon to Pray with: The icon I chose to put into this booklet for the activity is the Baptism of our Lord or Theophany. Below is the image. Also, there is a QR code available to see it online with an explanation of the symbols in the image.





FAITH QUESTIONS

- Can you remember your baptism or the last baptism you saw in church? What stood out to you about it? Why?
- When you hear the “waters of our baptism” in church or somewhere else, there are a lot of examples of “waters of our baptism.” In the time of the early church, these waters were living, or moving, bodies of water, such as rivers or lakes. Some churches even use ponds, rivers, lakes today. But, when you hear ‘waters of our baptism,’ what kind of water do you think of? A calm river? A still pond? Crashing waves at a beach? Feel free to share why?
- In our baptism, we make a promise to God and to the church to live a life that loves God and loves our neighbor as ourself. When you look back on your regular day, do you find that easy or difficult? Who can you turn toward to help you when you find it difficult?
- We learn that in baptism, ALL of our sins are washed away and ALL our sins are washed away when we confess them to God. But is there ever a time in your life when you feel like some sins can’t be washed away? Why?



- A common phrase that we use in church is “remember your baptism,” but that can be hard for people who don’t remember their baptism. Though, what that phrase means, is that we are called to remember that we were adopted into God’s family as a beloved child of God, and that nothing can separate us from God’s love. But there’s also other stuff to remember in our baptism too, such as service toward others, loving God with all of our heart, mind and spirit, and loving our neighbor as ourself. So, when someone tells you to ‘remember your baptism,’ what do you try to remember?

- In baptism, we are given an invitation to enter God’s Kingdom to come someday when all the saints, including us, are gathered together with God. But sometimes, we might feel like we’re not invited during times in our life. Has there been a time that you were worried about whether you would go to heaven? Feel free to share why.

- A phrase to help us live out our baptism is “walking wet,” which means we carry with us throughout our day the promises of our baptism to love God and to love our neighbor as ourself, or the promise from God that all our sins are washed away. How might you live out “walking wet” in your regular day?