

January 2025

# BROADCASTER

*A magazine of Worship Anew*



# Baptism

CONNECTING TO THE CROSS

# New Year, New Life

## *The Joy of Baptism*



*Matthew F. Leighty*  
**Matthew F. Leighty**  
Executive Director

**A**s we embark on a new year, I am constantly reminded of the joy of celebrating our baptismal birthdays, especially since our third child, Addison, celebrates hers on January 1. What an excellent way to start the year! One of the most cherished traditions in our family is celebrating our children's baptismal birthdays. These special days are beautiful reminders of the blessing of our own Baptism and the joy of being adopted into God's family. We gather to sing the hymn from their Baptism day, and the child then blows out their baptismal candle.

Each Worship Anew program begins at the baptismal font, symbolizing the new life we receive in Christ. On January 12, in our church and on Worship Anew, we will celebrate the Baptism of our

Lord. This significant event marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and is a moment where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all present. On this day, many of us will hear from God's Word as shared in Romans 6:1-4 (ESV):

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

This passage beautifully encapsulates the transformative power of Baptism. It reminds us that we are united with Christ through Baptism in His death and resurrection. In Baptism, we die



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*Worship Anew engages and equips aging adults with resources to live a full and abundant life in Jesus Christ.*



***“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”***

*Romans 6:1-4 ESV*

to sin and are made alive in Christ. One of my favorite baptismal hymns is “Baptized into Your Name Most Holy,” written by Johann Jacob Rambach. This hymn reflects the deep significance of Baptism, celebrating our union with the Triune God. It speaks of being buried with Christ, living by the Spirit, and trusting in God’s unwavering faithfulness and mercy.

*Verse 1*

*Baptized into Your name most holy,  
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
I claim a place, though weak and lowly,  
Among Your saints, Your chosen host.  
Buried with Christ and dead to sin,  
Your Spirit now shall live within.  
The hymn concludes with a prayer*

to live faithfully as God’s child, dedicating all that we are to His will.

*Verse 4*

*All that I am and love most dearly —  
Receive it all, O Lord, from me.  
Let me confess my faith sincerely;  
Help me Your faithful child to be!  
Let nothing that I am or own  
Serve any will but Yours alone.*

As we celebrate our Baptism, we embrace the profound truth that we are no longer bound by sin but walk in the new life granted to us by God’s grace. May this year be filled with the joy and renewal of living as baptized children of God. Through your Baptism, “we too walk in newness of life in Christ” (Romans 6:4 ESV).



Matthew Leighty’s daughter, Addison, celebrates her baptismal birthday.

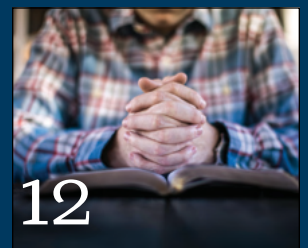
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# Your giving at work

Started several years ago, Worship Anew has a growing endowment funded by current gifts and gifts from wills, estates, IRA distributions, and more.

Every year, the Endowment Trustees review investment results and recommend annual distributions to enhance and grow the ministry of Worship Anew.

Past distributions have included broadcast equipment upgrades and purchases; lighting and sound improvements in our studio (seen at left); expansion into new markets; and even needs for our campus as we grow to provide for the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of today's aging adults, including painting and sealing our basement (seen directly at left).

As recorded in Genesis, Joseph saved for the "lean years" during the "fat years" for Egypt and the sons of Jacob. Generosity of donors like you to our endowment ensures the long-term viability of providing the Word to our viewers and readers.



# Helping Seniors

## *Know their Value & Live on Purpose*

*Q&A with John Nunes*  
*Reprinted from "Aging Well," a research project between*  
*Worship Anew & Barna Group*



**Q. For some, the second half of life can be discouraging. For example, three in five older adults 55-plus with chronic pain say they also deal with anxiety and insecurity. What are some ways older generations can find purpose and meaning as they age?**

A. Often bypassed but conspicuous in Luke's account of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21 ESV) is the idea of intergenerationality. The Spirit is poured out upon "all flesh" — that's an age-inclusive promise. Young people "see visions," older people "dream dreams." The "multitude came together" from many languages, ethnicities, and identities. They were diverse and undivided, gathered "together in one place" with the promise of saving transformation for "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord." No one is excluded.

That's the message every living person needs to hear: No matter your age or stage of life, God's design for the renewal of the world and the Church includes you.

Via the accrual of experience, obstacles overcome, goals accomplished, or suffering endured, those in the second half of life typically have earned a status where their voice can speak with prophetic precision. Visionary churches should create venues for older adults to dream big, with the capaciousness of wise guides. This process is enlivening for them and for the entire community of faith.

**Q. What are some practical ways pastors and church communities can come alongside seniors to help them overcome the obstacles of aging and embrace the second half of life as a blessing?**

A. The preposition of choice (here) is "with." We witness through our "with"-ness. This is about a journey together, like the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) in which the divine is present in ways we may not instantly recognize or immediately appreciate.



A practical starting point is for church leaders to see themselves as conveners of conversations, teaching, and modeling active listening with an intentional and strategic goal of creating relationships of reciprocity, respect, responsibility, and mutuality across generations.

Intergenerational activities can be enhanced when they are approached as part of the wider Christian commitment to diversity. ... A simple, but not simplistic, working acrostic for DIVERSITY is “Different Individuals Valuing Each other Regardless of Skin, Identity, Talent, or Years.”

**Q. What advice would you give to churches hoping to provide more opportunities for seniors to serve and contribute to their communities?**

A. (While) older adults sometimes have a sense of invisibility, they also possess wisdom about finding our truest selves by serving others. Despite the ample availability of more information than we can meaningfully process and despite the illusion of being knowledgeable, wisdom takes longer to acquire than any one lifetime can provide. Our highly mobile society doesn't permit the rootage we need, which is why we need traditions, rituals, mentors, communities, and institutions — practices and relationships of remembrance in which seniors often specialize.

**Q. In the “Aging Well” study, we find that whether a person feels they are leaving a legacy correlates with their sense of being valued and having purpose. What does this say to you about the importance of empowering older generations? What are some steps to better understand and value older congregants?**

A. Pastors have an opportunity to lead their communities of faith in developing a theological framework for intergenerationality. Mining their tradition and biblical sources, a working set of ideas can be articulated that describes the sort of experiences and interactions that lead to human flourishing. ... The older adult phase of life is also a time for summing up, making meaning, and letting go. Summing up involves reflecting on one's life. Making meaning concerns interpreting and surrendering to life's losses, achievements, and accomplishments. Letting go requires forgiveness, reconciliation, and bringing to resolution one's affairs. Pastors can grow in interpreting the unique struggles involved in this process by providing opportunities for counseling and the sacramental practice of confession and absolution.

*John Arthur Nunes is an author, speaker, and Lutheran pastor, as well as a senior fellow at the Center for Religion, Culture and Democracy. He has served as president of Concordia College New York, president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, and a professor at Valparaiso University.*



# The Baptism of Jesus

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

*Matthew 3:13-17 (ESV)*

**T**he first Sunday in Epiphany is January 12. On our Worship Anew program, the Rev. Shayne Jonker leads our program that celebrates the Baptism of Jesus. In Baptism, we are made new. We die to the Old Adam, our sinful self, and we are given a new life in Christ.

In the passage above, we see that John the Baptist is struggling with why Jesus would need to be baptized. John baptized people with a baptism of repentance. To repent is to turn — turn from a life focused on the desires of the flesh and our rebellion against God. You can see why he would be wondering why Jesus would desire to be baptized.

We take Jesus at His word that He did this to “fulfill all

righteousness.” That seems like a big deal! And we see that it was and is for us today. We see the Trinity on display as the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, and the voice of God the Father speaks, “This is my beloved Son.”

And thank God that we are not left with just repentance, or we would need to be down to that river every week, every day, every hour — you get the picture.

With Jesus’ Baptism, we are now baptized into Christ, into the whole package of what He’s done for us. Now that He’s defeated sin and death, our Baptism gives us a new life where we can be called righteous. We are made clean for good, and now we go through life knowing with confidence that our Heavenly Father calls us His beloved child.



# Worship Anew in January

Year 2025 | Series C



## Filled with Wisdom

**January 5, 2025 – Second Sunday of Christmas**  
**Rev. Thomas Eggold**

God's Wisdom saves you. The teachers in Jerusalem were being taught by the One in whom all wisdom is found. In Christ Jesus, the Passover Lamb was sacrificed for our sins once and for all. In Christ Jesus, the punishment for our foolishness was received. We have been forgiven, and heaven is ours.

*Sermon Text: Luke 2:40*

*Readings: Psalm 119:97-104; 1 Kings 3:4-15; Luke 2:40-52*



## Baptized into Christ

**January 12, 2025 – The Baptism of Our Lord**  
**Rev. Shayne Jonker**

"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:5 ESV). Today we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan, God in the flesh, and so also we celebrate our Baptism into Christ. What a great comfort in the midst of temptation and trial, sin and death, and every distress that we can say to ourselves, "I am baptized into Christ!"

*Sermon Text: Luke 3:21-22*

*Readings: Psalm 29; Romans 6:1-11; Luke 3:15-22*



## Read the Signs

**January 19, 2025 – Second Sunday after the Epiphany**  
**Rev. Paul Shoemaker**

Recognizing and understanding signs is an important skill to master when learning to drive. Jesus performed many miraculous signs and wonders so we can see the signs and know He is the Christ, the Son of God.

*Sermon Text: John 2:11*

*Readings: Psalm 118; Isaiah 62:1-5; John 2:1-11*



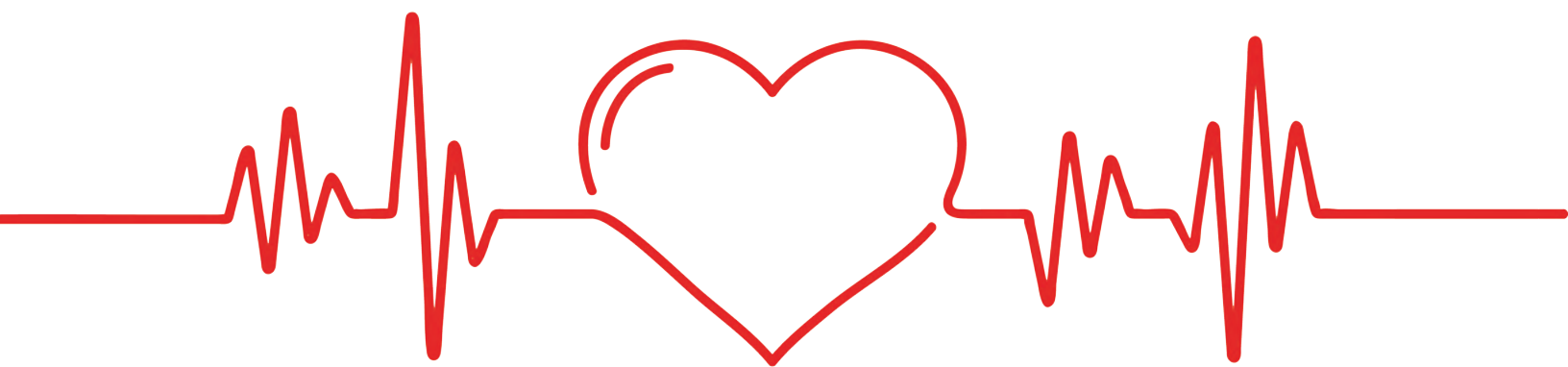
## Scripture Fulfilled

**January 26, 2025 – Third Sunday after the Epiphany**  
**Rev. William Mueller**

Jesus is invited to choose and read the Scripture reading at a worship service in His hometown of Nazareth. He reads a powerful section from Isaiah the Prophet about the work of the Messiah. He startles the worshipers with the statement, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." What? How could this be? But it begs us to examine our own lives and ask ourselves, "Are we offended at what Jesus says?"

*Sermon Text: Luke 4:16-30*

*Readings: Psalm 119:7-14; Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Luke 4:16-30*



# Important health screenings as we age

**A**n annual visit to the doctor can come with a variety of tests and recommendations for living a healthy lifestyle. With the vast world of health, including everything from medications, supplements, recommended workouts, and possible screenings, it can be easy to be overwhelmed.

Here is a list of screenings that are recommended. Please consult with your physician for what is right for you.



**Lipid Panel for Cholesterol:** Men older than 45 and women older than 55 should have their lipid levels tested regularly. After 65, a lipid test should be done every year.

**High Blood Pressure:** Screening is recommended at every visit for all adults in order to catch and treat hypertension.

**Type 2 Diabetes:** Any older adult with underlying hypertension or other cardiovascular disease should ask about being tested for Type 2 diabetes.

**Colorectal cancer:** Adults beginning at age 50 and continuing every two years until 75 should test for colorectal cancer. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer, it may be recommended that you start testing as early as 45 years of age or younger.

**Breast Cancer:** Women should start getting regular mammograms every two years starting at age 40 and ending at 74. Talk to your doctor about the possible risks of screening for breast cancer.



**Prostate Cancer:** Men who are 55–69 should talk to their doctor about screening for prostate cancer. This is done through a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test.

**Cervical Cancer:** Women begin screenings for cervical cancer at age 25 and continue until age 65 if they have had normal results in the past 10 years and no history of CIN2 or more serious diagnosis within the past 25 years. Once screenings are stopped, they do not need to be resumed.

**Osteoporosis Screening:** Women should have their first DEXA bone scan at 65. Repeated screenings are determined by your physician.

**Eye Exam:** An eye exam should be conducted every one to two years, starting at age 65, if other previous conditions do not exist.

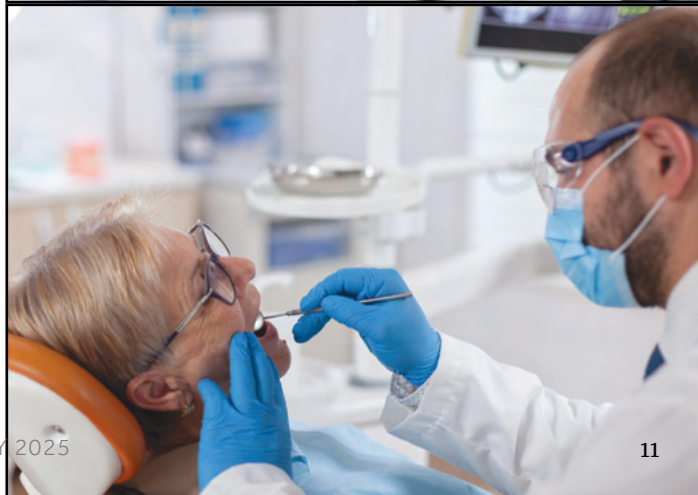
**Dental Exam:** Exams with your dentist are recommended twice a year for all ages. Dental health can affect your overall health so please inform your dentist of any changes to your health.

**Depression:** Many doctors have a mental health screening included in regular health questionnaires. Anytime our bodies change due to age or illness, it's good to do a mental health screening. Please talk to your primary care physician about options.

Some of these recommendations may change over time as we learn more about different diseases and how to best screen for them. Ask your doctor about these screenings and if they apply to you or if you may be at higher risk than others and should test earlier or more often.

If you don't have a primary care physician, talk to your local hospital to find available doctors in your area. A primary care physician (or family doctor) will oversee your overall health and not just one area of your health or major disease. Seeing a primary care physician for an annual check-up is recommended.

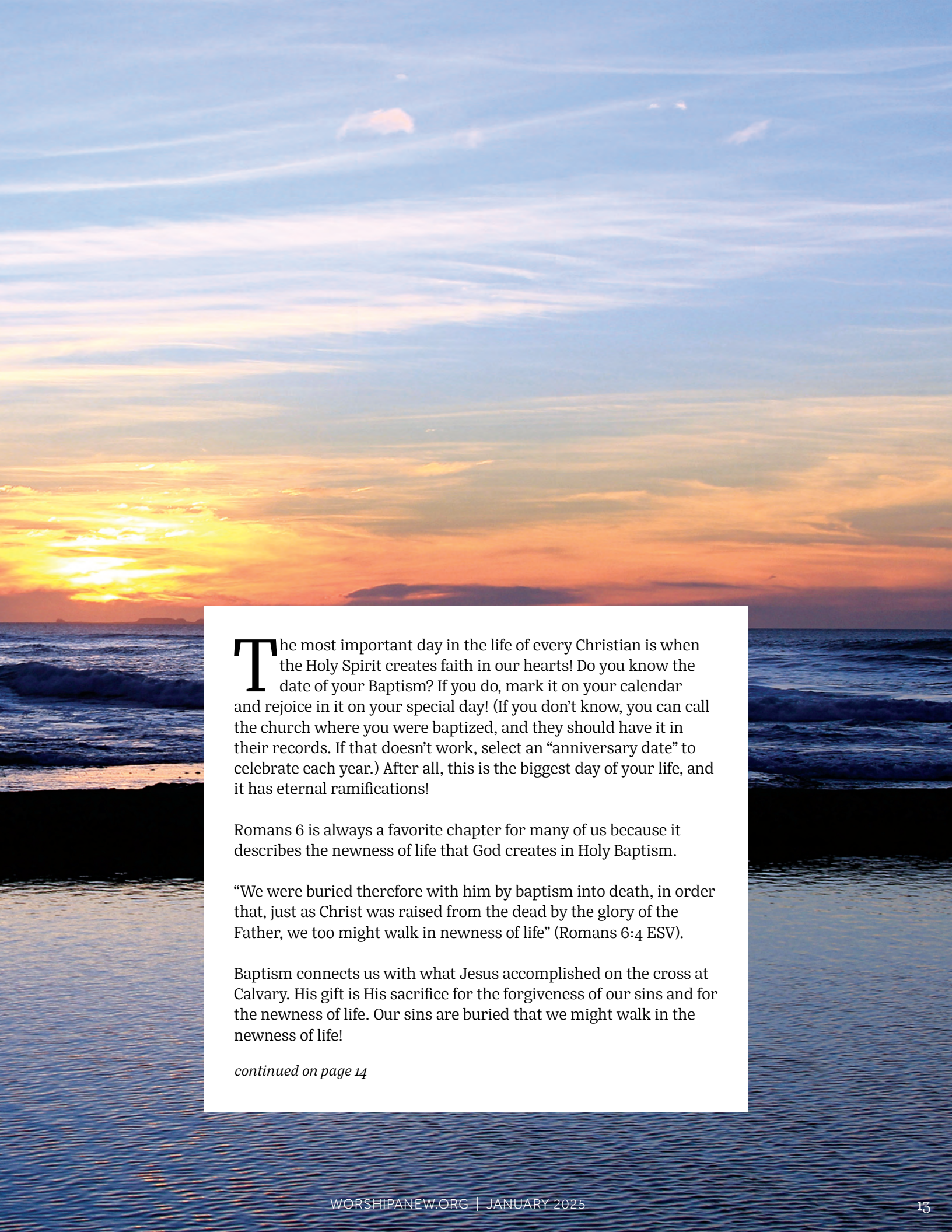
*Recommendations taken from the American Cancer Society at Cancer.org and the National Institute of Health and UCLAhealth.org*





# *Connecting to the Cross through Baptism*

*By the Rev. Dan May*



**T**he most important day in the life of every Christian is when the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts! Do you know the date of your Baptism? If you do, mark it on your calendar and rejoice in it on your special day! (If you don't know, you can call the church where you were baptized, and they should have it in their records. If that doesn't work, select an "anniversary date" to celebrate each year.) After all, this is the biggest day of your life, and it has eternal ramifications!

Romans 6 is always a favorite chapter for many of us because it describes the newness of life that God creates in Holy Baptism.

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4 ESV).

Baptism connects us with what Jesus accomplished on the cross at Calvary. His gift is His sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins and for the newness of life. Our sins are buried that we might walk in the newness of life!

*continued on page 14*



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For many of us, that day of baptism was when we were held in the arms of our loving parents, and we were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! It's a day that we cannot remember and only visualize through family photographs, but it is a day to always be remembered and celebrated. However, there are many Christians who are baptized as adults. The Baptism of adults is especially exciting because they are well aware of the miraculous blessing that God gives in this sacrament.

It is my privilege to serve in several care facilities with many elderly residents. As part of our worship and Bible study, there is a frequent reference to Baptism and God's call for everyone to be baptized.

After several years in one of our facilities, a man named "Larry" ask me about the possibility of being baptized even though he cannot actually leave the facility. I explained to him that we could do the Baptism within the facility and that all that was really required was God's Word and water. So, we arranged for the Baptism in the presence of the other residents who attend our worship in the Bible studies. He was very excited and thankful as were the other residents.



The Rev. Dan May, right, poses with "Larry," an 87-year-old man who was baptized at a care facility.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to be involved in Baptisms of elderly people on a number of occasions. Larry was 87 years old on the day that I baptized him, and he received the newness of life as surely as the infant at the baptismal font. He, like other adults and especially elderly adults, was filled with joy on the day of his Baptism. All who were present shared the joy of their faith with their families and other friends and acquaintances. It is a great joy to know that you are a beloved child of God, welcomed into this family through the Waters of Holy Baptism.

The New Testament records several incidents when adults and whole families were baptized, and they always rejoiced.

Act 16 tells us about the Apostle Paul and Silas who were in jail for preaching the Gospel. Wonderfully, God miraculously opened the doors of the jail. The jailer feared for his life because of the prisoners being set free, and yet he trusted what he had heard from Paul and Silas. He asked the biggest and most important question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God" Acts 16:30-34 (ESV).

Worship Anew partners with Lutheran Senior Care Ministry (LSCM) in bringing the Holy Gospel to people who cannot attend church services.

God does the miracle in Holy Baptism, and we are privileged to share it. Peter reminds us (1 Peter 3:21) of Baptism's saving grace.

Rejoice in your Baptism every day! It is your best day forever!

*Pastor Dan May serves as the Executive Chaplain for Lutheran Senior Care Ministries in Fort Wayne, Ind. He previously served as the Indiana District - LCMS President.*

***The baptism of adults is especially exciting because they are well aware of the miraculous blessing that God gives in this sacrament.***





# Helping Secure Your Grandchildren's Future

## The Benefits of 529 Plans

By Jon Dize

Director of Development & Strategic Initiatives

*"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them."*

*Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV)*

**W**hether or not you have grandchildren, grand nieces and nephews, or have the pleasure of serving as a "grand-friend" to someone, one of the most impactful ways to support their future is by investing in their education, and a 529 Plan might be an excellent option to consider.

### WHAT IS A 529 PLAN?

Named for a section of the Internal Revenue Code, 529 plans are state-sponsored savings accounts that offer tax benefits to the donor when used for qualified education expenses. These expenses can include tuition, fees, books, and even room and board for college, vocational schools, and other post-secondary education institutions. Some plans also allow funds to be used for K-12 private and parochial education, and student loan repayments.

### TAX ADVANTAGES

One of the most significant benefits of a 529 plan is the tax advantages it offers. Contributions to a 529 plan grow tax-deferred, meaning there are no taxes due on the earnings as the account grows. When the funds are withdrawn for qualified education expenses, they are also tax-free.

### FLEXIBILITY AND CONTROL

529 plans offer a great deal of flexibility. As the account owner, you maintain control over the funds (or the parent does, if you contribute to an existing 529 plan created for the student). The beneficiary can be changed to another grandchild if the original beneficiary decides not to pursue higher education. Additionally, there are no income limits for contributors, so anyone can contribute



regardless of their financial situation.

## ESTATE PLANNING BENEFITS

For those concerned with estate planning, 529 plans offer a unique advantage. Contributions to a 529 plan are considered completed gifts for tax purposes, which means they are removed from your taxable estate. You can contribute up to \$17,000 per year per beneficiary without incurring gift taxes, or you can choose to make a lump-sum contribution of up to \$85,000 and spread it over five years. This can be a strategic way to reduce your estate while providing for your grandchildren's future.

## ENCOURAGING EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

By setting up a 529 plan, you're not just providing financial support; you're also sending a powerful message about the importance of education. Knowing that they have a dedicated fund for their education can motivate your grandchildren to pursue their academic goals with greater determination and confidence.

## CHECK YOUR STATE PLANS

While 529 plans can be a fantastic savings tool, every state is different, and you should check what is available in your state and the states where your grandchildren (or grand-friends) live. Also, distributions can affect the student's financial aid package, so you should call the 529 plan administrator and discuss details or view the FAQ section of their website. As always, make sure to consult with a financial adviser to understand the best strategy for you and your loved ones.

Investing in a 529 plan for your grandchildren or grand-friends is a thoughtful and strategic way to support their future and to share what you think is important for their future. The tax advantages, flexibility, and potential estate planning benefits make it an attractive option for many grandparents. It's a gift that truly keeps on giving as you help your grandchildren achieve their dreams and build a brighter future.

## Why do some churches baptize babies?

To start with why we baptize at all, we do it because Jesus has told us to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Matthew 28:19 (ESV). The Bible teaches that Baptism is a way that God delivers His gifts of grace through the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:38-39 (ESV), we're told that the gifts of baptism are for "you and your children." Jesus blessed children and told us to receive faith as children.

When we read in Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) that "we have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God," we see our inability to do anything to work for our salvation. So, we baptize babies, not because they can work for their salvation, but because they can't.

## If someone can understand Baptism, should they be taught about it before they're baptized?

In Acts 8:26-39, we read about an Ethiopian who is seeking to understand the scriptures. Whenever the Bible is read, the Holy Spirit is working. In the case of the Ethiopian, Philip shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with him and connected what the Ethiopian already knew from reading scripture and worshiping in the temple. After this exchange, the Ethiopian desired to be baptized. In Acts 16:25-33, a jailer is instructed before being baptized. Many churches follow a version of this practice by having formal classes with a group of adults before baptizing them, or a pastor may have more informal visits with an individual in their home. Whether in a church building or at home, with a group or one-on-one, God works through His Word, creating and sustaining faith and fulfilling His promises.

## *A note from the Editor ...*

In our letters to the editor section, we would like to answer any and all questions that you have about scripture, aging well, and our ministry. Please send your questions to [editor@worshipanew.org](mailto:editor@worshipanew.org). Please know that we will try to answer as many questions as we can. Thank you and enjoy!



# Always growing in friendship

## *Intimacy vs. Isolation*

By Heidi Goehmann, LCSW, deaconess

**T**here was a time I thought friendship began with slumber parties and secrets shared in sleeping bags. I also thought friendship began on athletic fields and during recess or at the lunch table. I thought they were easy-peasy-lemon-squeezy.

I thought I must have been doing it wrong because it wasn't so easy for me.

Then I grew up, and friendships got easier in some ways and harder in others. And whether it's because I'm a therapist, or because I like coffee shops and conversation, or just because I'm interested in noticing things, I have noticed this:

***Friendship is a struggle at any age. It's a good struggle, but it isn't something that will ever be easy in our lives.***

Finding friendship is hard and growing friendship is hard. These are good things, but they are not easy things. I think our culture puts a certain amount of pressure to be good at relationships immediately, with very little effort, and little teaching, guiding, or helping. We each have an internal drama-avoidance meter, as well. When my kids have friendship drama at school, I feel incredibly put out. I want it to be their problem, not mine. I'm exhausted by the idea of more relational challenges in my life. Why? Because I

have my own relationship issues to deal with.

What if I saw my kids' challenges with friendship and my own challenges with relationship differently?

WHAT IF RELATIONSHIP STRUGGLES WEREN'T DRAMA, BUT LEARNING?

Relationships are hard work, and we don't come out of the womb knowing how to be good at them. Some of what we need to know we learn from our families. Some of what we need to know we learn through the fire of trial and error, making mistakes and trying again.

Relationship struggles in our own lives, whether in friendship, family, or marriage, are an opportunity for much growth for each of us.

Intimacy is a developmental phase. We all go through it. We each must lay that identity formation foundation before we can truly be intimate with others. We are all a work in progress.

Here is the crux:

While we each must lay that identity formation foundation before we can truly be intimate with others, as we grow, we each must also be willing to be intimate in order to understand ourselves better.



This is how development works — in layers and repeats, rather than the simplistic phases I think we'd like to see. As we work through the challenges of friendships and relationships, especially with a desire to grow and a lens of progress not perfection, we will root out the parts of ourselves that need growth and also to be able to see the places we have grown. This gives us a clearer picture of who we are and who we'd like to be.

AUTHENTICITY + CONNECTION + INTIMACY = REAL RELATIONSHIP

RELATIONSHIP + CONNECTION + INTIMACY = A MORE AUTHENTIC VERSION OF ME

Friendships take time, energy, investment, work, forgiveness, and a fair amount of awkwardness, but the outcome is glorious.

*Writer, licensed clinical social worker, and theologian, Heidi Goehmann produces resources that advocate for mental health and genuine relationships. Check out her book, "Finding Hope" and download a free chapter at [heidigoehmann.com/finding-hope](http://heidigoehmann.com/finding-hope).*



### an exercise in intimacy

What parts of yourself do you wish more people  
saw and understood?



What parts of yourself do you generally want  
to hide away from other people?



What relationships in your life have helped you become a more  
authentic version of yourself?



How did these relationships help you in this identity work?

[heidigoehmann.com](http://heidigoehmann.com)

# The Heavens Opened

*By Rev. Gene Brunow*

**T**he Gospel for the January 12 program where we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord is Luke 3:15-22. This text has three short segments. The first deals with the curiosity of the people about John and the Christ and the second with the narrative of Herod and his dislike of John the Baptist. Finally, there is a picture of Jesus' Baptism and Father and Holy Spirit.

Verse 15 says: "people were in expectation." They had been waiting for the Savior for a long time. Some were thinking that John might be the Messiah. John sets them straight in a hurry. John's Baptism was with water, and Jesus would baptize them with fire. In fact, John adds that he is not even qualified to unlatch Jesus' sandals.

The next section is about Herod and his anger at John for being called out about his illegal marriage to his brother's wife. It ultimately gets John thrown into prison.

The last part speaks of Jesus being baptized along with others that have come to John. Jesus did not need to be baptized for His sins. He did it so that Scripture would be fulfilled. This showed that Jesus did not skip any part of his Father's salvation plan. It was perfectly carried out. That means we can be absolutely certain that Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection takes care of our salvation.

A very significant endorsement comes in verse 22. Heaven was opened. The opening of heaven at Jesus' Baptism means that it will forever be opened to all humanity through the flesh of Christ by the Spirit of Christ. At this time, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus. Then the crowning touch is when the Father says: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22 ESV).

This text gives us great comfort concerning our salvation. We can have such incredible confidence concerning our eternity in heaven and the strong support we have for our daily life in our Baptism.

*The Rev. Gene Brunow is a member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. Find more of his devotionals at [genesbrunotes.com](http://genesbrunotes.com).*



## This month's study text:

### *John the Baptist Prepares the Way*

*15 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, 16 John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*

*18 So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. 19 But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.*

*21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."*

**Luke 3:15-22 (ESV)**

### **Reflection:**

Think of times in your life when you were living in expectation. Was it because you were in a painful situation you were waiting to end? Were you waiting for test results that had the potential to rearrange your life? Or, were you excited for something good to come that you had been promised?

You can see John struggling with his unworthiness in front of Jesus in this passage. Yet, he still did what was asked of him. How is this a good model for us when we feel that we aren't worthy to do what God is calling us to do? Do you ever feel like you're not worthy of being given the work God has put in front of you to do?

When we read that the "heavens were opened," we are reminded that God comes down to us and that the way to salvation has been won by Him for us. We are not in the position to open heaven or to ascend to our God by our good works and spiritual effort. How is this a comfort to you in your times of spiritual weakness?

### **Prayer:**

Lord, open my eyes to the nature of your kingdom and so move me to live a life worthy of your Gospel by reaching out with the Good News that leads to everlasting life. Amen.

*(Prayer taken from the Lutheran Study Bible)*



# *Passing on your faith*

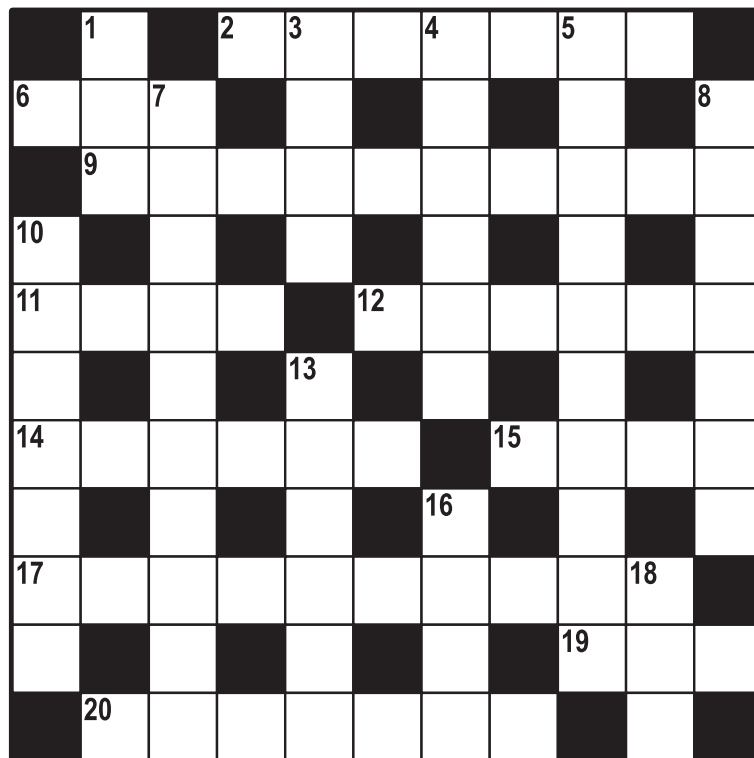
## WORKSHEET

**P**assing on your faith is important for everyone, but especially for older generations as they leave a legacy for the future. This worksheet will give you a start for the important items that you can share with your children and grandchildren about your faith.

- ▶ Favorite hymn?
- ▶ Favorite verse?
- ▶ When and where were you baptized?
- ▶ When and where were you confirmed?
- ▶ What church do you attend (or did attend) and why?
- ▶ Who are/were the spiritual mentors in your life?
- ▶ Talk about important moments in your faith journey (i.e. struggles, inspirations, etc.)

**CROSSWORD PUZZLE**

No 22845

**Across:**

2. Fragrant garden plant.
6. Ball's path.
9. Knightly sport.
11. Degree of quality.
12. Arcade support.
14. It says "ADMIT ONE".
15. Branch branch.
17. Everything you can perform.
19. Teacher's answer sheet.
20. Goods producer.

**Down:**

1. Works at a gallery.
3. Man with a title.
4. Close-fitting cap.
5. Embroidery.
7. Horn of plenty.
8. Cloud function.
10. Cicero's skill.
13. Hidden.
16. Piglet's papa.
18. Electric fish.

ANSWER: Across: 2. VERBENA, 6. ARC, 9. TOURNAMENT, 11. RANK, 12. PILLAR, 14. TICKET, 15. TWIG, 17. REPERTOIRE, 19. KEY, 20. FACTORY. Down: 1. ART, 3. EARL, 4. BEANIE, 5. NEEDLEWORK, 7. CORNUCOPIA, 8. STORAGE, 10. ORATORY, 13. SECRET, 16. BOAR, 18. EEL.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*Remember the days of old;*

consider the years of many  
generations; ask your father, and  
he will show you, your elders,  
and they will tell you.

Deuteronomy 32:7 ESV