

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH GUIDELINES FOR HOLY BAPTISM

The means of grace within the Lutheran understanding is revealed to us through specific visible signs and given power through the Word. Baptism is not a mere sprinkling of water on an infant's or an adult's head. The Word proclaimed with the water pours out new life and new possibilities. The water with the Word initiates us into the promises of God. Luther writes:

In baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what God promised.

It is not water that does these things, but God's word with water and our trust in this word. Water by itself is only water, but with the word of God, it is a life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.

The understanding of the role in which the community of faith plays in the development of the newly baptized person is very significant. A newly baptized person is being born into God's family. The local congregation is given the honor to aid in the maturation of the newly baptized. Christian love and forgiveness are modeled for each newly baptized person by the local congregation and the whole Christian Church. We understand, as the community of believers, that no newborn can fully mature without nurturing and love. Trusting in the Holy Spirit we are the Body of Christ called together to help in the growth of a newly baptized person.

Zion takes seriously its role as Christ's body on earth. We thank God whenever anyone wishes to be baptized into the Church, our congregation, and the new possibilities as revealed through Jesus Christ. We do also ask that the following guidelines be taken just as seriously by those who are preparing for baptism:

Zion asks:

1. That a visitation be arranged with the pastor of Zion or his or her representative in the household of each candidate for baptism prior to the baptismal date.
2. That at least one sponsor or godparent be an active member of a Christian congregation. If this is impossible then a member of Zion would be honored to take on this responsibility.
3. That immediate family and sponsors shall arrive 30 minutes prior to worship and each sponsor meet briefly with the pastor at that time.
4. That each baptism takes place before the Zion faith community with the exception of emergencies.

NOTE: Due to the holiness of this sacrament, we ask that photos be taken after the service. A video may be used only after discussing its use with the pastor.