

Dear Faith Shapers,

I'm not a fan of New Year's resolutions (namely, because I can never manage to keep them past a week or two), but there is something refreshing and invigorating about a new year. It feels, at least momentarily, as though anything is possible. All those blank squares on my calendar call out to me that this is a fresh start. Sometimes, the year before has been so challenging, that a new year presents itself as a chance to wipe the slate clean and begin again—praying for positive change.

But do we really need to wait for a new year, or a new job, or a new relationship, or a new hobby, to get that fresh start that we desire?

Baptism offers us a new beginning daily.

On January 8, we will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. We will remember Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. But every day is a day to celebrate our own baptism, to remember that God has named us and claimed us as God's beloved children.

Remember and rejoice!

Peace,

Stacey Nalean-Carlson
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Washed in Grace

Martin Luther insisted that every time we wash with water is an opportunity to remember our baptism and the promises God made to us in it.

So when you take a bath or a shower or when you wash your hands before

meal time, trace the sign of the cross on your forehead and say out loud to yourself, "I am God's beloved child." And then add



whatever you need to hear that day about God's grace poured out for you.

- * I am God's beloved. I am free.
- * I am God's beloved. I am whole.
- * I am God's beloved. I am found.
- * I am God's beloved. I am forgiven.

To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than Baptism, which no other kind of life on earth can acquire.

—Martin Luther

This information is prepared for you by the
Northwestern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network
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Godparenting 101

Godparents, or baptismal sponsors, promise to nurture their godchildren in the Christian faith. But how? What does that really look like? Where to begin?

1. **Pray.** Prayer doesn't have to be anything elaborate or eloquent. As you talk to God, mention your godchild by name. Thank God for your godchild. Ask God to help him grow in faith, hope, and love. Then, in conversation with your godchild, let him know you've been praying for him.

2. **Celebrate baptismal birthdays.** A card, a small gift, or a phone call on the anniversary of your godchild's baptism day will help her to remember her baptism. Tell her what you remember about that special day. Over time, the story of her baptism will become a cherished story, persistently reminding her of how much she is loved.

3. **Educate yourself.** There are some terrific resources available to assist you in this role. Here are just a few:

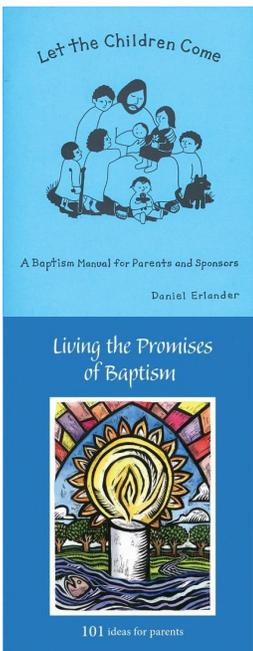
Let the Children Come: A Baptism Manual for Parents and Sponsors by Daniel Erlander. Lots of great, accessible information here.

Splash! We Do!: A Guide for Godparents is part of a series of resources published by Augsburg Fortress. Other resources in the series include greeting cards, cds, and a keepsake book for parents to record memories of their child's first three years.

Living the Promises of Baptism: 101 Ideas for Parents is, as the title suggests, geared toward parents, but could certainly be used by godparents as well.

All these resources are available at augsburgfortress.org.

4. **Remember you're not alone.** You're part of a team—complete with parents, congregation members, and others—intent on raising this child in the Christian faith. The Holy Spirit empowers all of you!



Baptism Reunion

The Baptism of Our Lord is a perfect time to host a Baptism Reunion in your congregation. Send special invitations to all those baptized during the past year. Invite them to come forward for a blessing and time of baptismal remembrance during the worship service. Host a brunch after worship, with those baptized during the past year as the guests of honor. If many of the guests of honor are toddlers, serve apple sauce, Cheerios, and other toddler-friendly food! This is a great opportunity to check in with families, reminding them that the congregation supports them on this baptismal journey!