

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 2021  
BAPTISM OF JESUS

*Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to the songs. However, our musicians have chosen music to fit the scriptures. We invite you to look up the words in your worship book and ponder them. If you do not have a worship book, ponder the words to one of your favourite hymns and listen for God's voice. Those who have internet may find the songs on YouTube.*

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK:**

*To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.*

*~Lewis B. Smedes*

**BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...**

*Breath figures frequently in Scripture. God's breath or 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 risen and claimed by God as the beloved with whom God is pleased.*

*Of course, breathing is two 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 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.*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Creator Spirit, moving over the waters,

**you renew our baptism.**

God of the flood,

**you save us from destruction.**

Holy Spirit, Jordan dove,

**you came upon Jesus, descend now upon us.**

Voice from heaven, call us by name.

**We are your beloved.**

**CHILDREN'S SONG** *Voices United #577 I've Got Peace Like A River*

**CENTERING PRAYER**

Holy God, creator of light and giver of goodness, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace, and transform us by your Spirit, that we may follow after your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**A NEW CREED**

We are not alone; we live in God's world.

We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

## **CHILDREN'S TIME**

When my sisters and I were children, we used to send secret messages to each other. If you use lemon juice to write a message on a piece of paper and let it dry, you can't see the message. That is, until you apply heat to the paper. We used to use a candle, or rather, Kelly did because she was the oldest. You can also use an iron or a blow dryer to heat the paper and have the message slowly appear. We had fun, giving each other invisible messages! Even though we couldn't see the message when we first received the paper, we knew it was there.

Which is why the Baptism of Jesus reminds me of our secret messages. The Holy Spirit, the breath of God, showed up in the form of a dove at Jesus' baptism. When we are baptized, we receive the Holy Spirit – the breath of God. I cannot see the Holy Spirit. I believe and trust the breath of God to be with me because I EXPERIENCE the Holy Spirit. Like the "secret" message, we know the Holy Spirit is with us and in us because there are times in our lives when we experience that divine breath, and suddenly, we KNOW, we UNDERSTAND! We can't explain why we know or understand, we just do. THAT is the Holy Spirit saying, "Here I am! You are not alone! I will give you strength, courage, wisdom and faith!"

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit is not a secret! Whenever we live our faith, it becomes clear to those around us that God is with us. This does not mean that everything will always be peachy, ducky, keen! It does mean that even in difficult times, the Holy Spirit does not leave us and gives us the strength to carry on in faith. Who knew that divine breath would be so amazing!

## **MISSION & SERVICE**

### **RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVOR ANSWERS CALL TO MINISTRY**

Growing up, Deb Anderson-Pratt would never have imagined that she would become a minister. A Cree/Saulteaux residential school survivor, Deb disliked the church for many years.

"I grew up living on the George Gordon First Nation reserve. Religious leaders visited us all the time to try to convert us. One of them told my great-grandmother, MaryJane Anderson, that we were all going to hell because of the Native teachings she was giving us."

Deb has vivid memories of the day a group of ministers were at her great-grandmother's home for a meal. An argument broke out about whose theology she should pass along to Deb and the other children: "We used to have a tent down the hill from our house. My grandmother told them to go to the tent and discuss whose teaching was right, and if they could agree, she would teach her children that. Needless to say, no one came back."

Deb's great-grandmother struggled to maintain her belief in both the traditional Indigenous teachings and the biblical ones, turmoil that was instilled in her at residential school. "She was taken to residential school when she was just four and was forbidden to mention, much less live out, traditional teachings. She shared them with me kind of in secret. She had to be subtle about it because if she got caught, she could go to jail," says Deb.

How did Deb become a minister? In the late 1980's she took a job as a secretary in a Lutheran church, and the minister encouraged her to answer God's call. She began studying but at that point wasn't ready to become a minister. Still, she continued to be involved in the United Church's All

Native Circle Conference and eventually, in 2012, began to feel the Spirit pull her toward ministry again.

The exact time she responded to God's call is etched in Deb's heart. It was September 14, 2012. Deb had quit her job to look after her ill sister, whose bed she was changing. "I sat down and I said, 'Sister, I have this strong call. God is calling me to train [for ministry] again.' My sister had tears in her eyes and said, 'I think you need to answer the call.'" Deb contacted the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre to re-enroll.

The following October, Deb's sister died. "I found I wasn't angry at God for taking her. I knew God had used her for a channel to get me where I needed to be," she says.

In fall 2020, Deb was one of six Indigenous ministers ordained or commissioned in the United Church. "I cried when I was ordained. It took eight years to get where God had been calling me." Since 2016, Deb has worked for the Regina Native Outreach Ministry. Today, she is working hard to help purchase a building. "Our people will not go to a mainstream church. We have very many lost people in the community, especially in the core area, and we want a place where they can come and feel safe. That's our dream."

Your Mission & Service gifts help train ministry leaders whose work transforms their community. Your generosity through Mission & Service supports the Sandy-Saulteaux Centre in Manitoba, where both Indigenous and Christian spiritual beliefs are respected, shared, and understood—where Indigenous leaders like Deb answer God's call to a ministry of healing and hope. Thank you.

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

O You who are the Light of the minds that know you, the Life of the hearts that love you, the Strength of the spirits that seek you; help us so to know you that we may truly love you, so to love you that we may fully serve you, in whose service is perfect freedom.

## **READINGS AND PSALM**

### **First Reading: 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.*

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the 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. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### **Psalm 29**

#### ***The voice of the LORD is upon the waters. (Ps. 29:3)***

<sup>1</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, you gods,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

<sup>2</sup>**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name;  
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**

<sup>3</sup>The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;  
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

**<sup>4</sup>The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice;  
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor. R**

<sup>5</sup>The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees;  
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

**<sup>6</sup>the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.**

<sup>7</sup>The voice of the LORD  
bursts forth in lightning flashes.

**<sup>8</sup>The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;  
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. R**

<sup>9</sup>The 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!"

**<sup>10</sup>The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;  
the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore.**

<sup>11</sup>O LORD, give strength to your people;  
give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace. R

### **Second Reading: 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.*

<sup>1</sup>While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. <sup>2</sup>He 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." <sup>3</sup>Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." <sup>4</sup>Paul 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." <sup>5</sup>On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—  
<sup>7</sup>altogether there were about twelve of them.

### **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.*

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And 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. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He 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. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And 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. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

## **SERMON**

### **The Baptism of Jesus - Exerpts taken from Luther's Large Catechism (Inclusive version)**

Martin Luther, Church reformer, had a love/hate relationship with God for many years. When Luther came to his understanding of God's grace, his whole life was turned around! Suddenly, he loved God passionately! Living in Christ became everything!

As we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, I share with you experts from Luther's Large Catechism, particularly the section about Baptism. In these words you will hear the passion of Luther for everyone to take to heart what it means to be Baptized into Christ. Luther's own Baptism propelled his life and ministry.

Denominations aside, hear the gift of God's grace being extended to all in this wonderful sacrament.

*Every Christian ought to have at least some brief, elementary instruction in our two sacraments because without these no one can be a Christian. We shall take up Baptism, through which we are first received into the Christian community.*

*In the first place, we must above all be familiar with the words upon which Baptism is founded and to which everything is related that is to be said on the subject, namely, where the Lord Christ says in Matt. 28:19: Go into all the world, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Likewise Mark 16:16: The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.*

*Observe, first, that these words contain God's commandment and ordinance. You should not doubt, then, that Baptism is of divine origin, not something devised or invented by human beings. Moreover, it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we shall not be saved. We are not to regard it as an indifferent matter, then, like putting on a new red coat. It is of the greatest importance that we regard Baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted. It is the chief cause of our contentions and battles because the world now is full of sects who proclaim that Baptism is an external thing and that external things are of no use. But no matter how external it may be, here stand God's Word and command which have instituted, established, and confirmed Baptism. What God institutes and commands cannot be useless. It is a most precious thing, even though to all appearances it may not be worth a straw. So the words read, "Go, baptize," not in your name but "in God's name."*

*To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by human beings but by God's own self. Although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act. From this fact everyone can easily conclude that it is of much greater value than the work of any person or saint. For what work can humanity do that is greater than God's work?*

*Now you can understand how to answer properly the question, What is Baptism? It is not simply common water, but water comprehended in God's Word and commandment and made holy by them. It is nothing else than a divine water, not that the water in itself is nobler than other water, but that God's Word and commandment are added to it.*

*Note the distinction then: Baptism is a very different thing from all other water, not by virtue of the natural substance but because here something nobler is added. God's own honor, power and might are staked on it. Therefore it is not simply a natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water--praise it in any other terms you can--all by virtue of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word which no one can sufficiently extol, for it contains and conveys all the fullness of God.*

*In the second place, since we now know what Baptism is and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn for what purpose it was instituted, that is, what benefits, gifts, and effects it brings. Nor can we understand this better than from the words of Christ quoted above, "The one who believes and is baptized shall be saved." To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit and purpose of Baptism is to save. No one is baptized in order to become a prince, but as the words say, to "be saved." To be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and evil and to enter into the realm of Christ and live with him forever.*

*In Baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and to practice all their life. One always has enough to do to believe firmly what Baptism promises and brings--victory over death and evil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit along with the Spirit's gifts. In short, the blessings of Baptism are so boundless that if timid nature considers them, it may well doubt whether they could all be true.*

*To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength and comfort 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." This is the reason why these two things are done in Baptism: the body has water poured over it, though it cannot receive anything but the water, and meanwhile the word is spoken so that the soul may grasp it.*

*Further, we are not primarily concerned whether the baptized person believes or not, for in the latter case Baptism does not become invalid. Everything depends upon the Word and commandment of God. This, perhaps, is a rather sublet point, but it is based upon what I have already said, that Baptism is simply water and God's word in and with each other; that is, when the Word accompanies the water, Baptism is valid, even though faith be lacking. For my faith does not constitute Baptism but receives it. Baptism does not become invalid even if it is wrongly received or used, for it is bound not to our faith but to the Word. Similarly, those who partake unworthily of the Lord's Supper received the true sacrament even though they do not believe.*

*Since the water and the Word together constitute one Baptism, body and soul shall be saved forever: the soul through the Word in which it believes, the body because it is united with the soul and apprehends Baptism in the only way it can. No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than Baptism, for through it we obtain perfect holiness and salvation, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire. Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

**SONG OF THE MONTH** *With One Voice #648 Jesus, Come! For We Invite You*

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

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

**Have mercy, O God.**

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, let us pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Luther, Martin. Luther's Large Catechism. Christian Classics Ethereal Library

**Have mercy, O God.**

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, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For all those living in care homes and institutions and for those who minister to them; for the imprisoned and those who show them mercy, for the lonely and those who provide companionship, for all who suffer in body, mind or spirit. You bring consolation to those who weep. Embrace those who feel far-off, excluded, or defeated. Sustain the weak and weary. We pray especially for Alena, Mike Froese, Brooke Alexiuk, Tracy Skoglund, Carolyn, Douglas, Debbie, Dwayne; Nicole; Sandy Lange, Matthew Grossman, Gordon Fulford, Jennifer & family; Lorraine & Walter Pokrant; for all those infected with the corona virus, or whose loved ones have died because of it; that God shower compassion, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For our congregations, especially we lift up Terry and Bill Howie who are moving to Niverville. Make their transition smooth, grant them ease of new friendships and a continued connection with existing relationships; for students returning to school, for those seeking renewal in their daily work, that all the beloved of God experience grace and peace, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

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

**Have mercy, O God.**

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.

**Amen.**

***THE LORD'S PRAYER***

***BENEDICTION***

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

***SENDING SONG With One Voice #690 Shall We Gather At The River***

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