

BAPTISM GUIDELINES  
Preparing for Baptism  
**(Proposed revisions appear in italics.)**  
*(June-July, 2011)*

Baptism is the foundational event of the Christian life. Through Baptism we are made a part of God's people in Christ and receive the promise of eternal life in God's kingdom. All Christian living is a celebration of and response to what takes place in Baptism. Therefore, baptism requires thoughtful preparation and planning. It is not something to be done in haste or without careful consideration of what it means.

In order to better assist people in preparing for Baptism, whether their own or their child's, the pastor and congregation council of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church offer the following information and guidance for those who respond to the invitation to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

*BAPTISM OF INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN*

*It is most desirable that at least one (or both) parent(s) of the child be a member of ZELC.*

*"Member" means they are "on the roll".*

*If one parent is not a member at any church and one parent was a member of Zion within the last ten years but was removed from the roll because of inactivity, that parent will be expected to become active by the time of the baptism by (as the Constitution states)*

*\*receiving Communion at Zion and duly recording it; \*\*making a contribution of record to ZELC; \*\*\*making a public or private profession of faith. Formal re-instatement by Church Council action should be completed or scheduled before the baptism occurs.*

*If neither parent was ever a member of Zion but one or both is a member of another congregation, the couple will be asked to request baptism from that congregation.*

*If neither parent was ever a member of Zion but one or both were once confirmed at another church and are now inactive, there would be two options for having the child baptized at Zion...*

*\*Either or both could become members of ZELC (reception as members).*

*\*\*Or, A sponsor from ZELC who is on the Zion membership roll would agree to serve as godparent of the child.*

*If neither parent was ever confirmed (or made an adult commitment to Christ and was baptized)*

*\*Either or both parents could become members of ZELC through adult confirmation*

*\*\* Or a sponsor from ZELC who is on the Zion membership roll would agree to serve as godparent of the child.*

PRE-BAPTISMAL EDUCATION AND COUNSELING

The family of a child or an adult candidate for baptism should contact the pastor when they are ready for the sacrament to be administered.

Prior to the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, the families of children and/or adult candidates will meet with the pastor, and other representatives of the congregation as deemed appropriate, to share and discuss the meaning of Holy Baptism. In most cases this will involve a session(s) with a pastor either at the church office or in the home of the family or individual. At that time the sacrament's meaning will be explained, questions will be answered, literature expanding on the subject of baptism will be shared, and the mechanics of the rite

(service) will be reviewed. It would be desirable if the sponsors could be present at these sessions, also.

### BAPTISMAL CELEBRATIONS

While not limited to the following festivals, due to their emphases on baptism and the Holy Spirit, it is suggested that baptisms be scheduled with the pastor on one of the following festivals.

- The Baptism of Our Lord (early January)
- Easter Vigil or Easter Day (late March-late April)
- Pentecost or Holy Trinity Sunday (late May- mid June)
- All Saint's Sunday (Sunday nearest November 1)
- The Third Sunday of Advent (mid-December)

Please contact the pastor for a specific calendar date on which these festivals will occur in any given year.

*In the event that there is a request by more than one family to have a child baptized, only one date will be scheduled for baptism in any month. Once a date is established for a baptism, additional baptisms will be scheduled either on the same date in the month or in a future month.*

### BAPTISMAL SPONSORS

Sponsors for baptismal candidates (adult and children) are desirable. The role of a sponsor is to assure that all the promises made regarding proper instruction in the faith and exposure to the practices of the church will be fulfilled over time. If the parents fail to fulfill these vows, the sponsor is expected to intercede and, if necessary, provide for the fulfillment of these vows themselves. This is a serious undertaking and should be considered carefully, both by the parents and by the sponsors. A sponsor must be a confirmed member of a Christian Church that espouses the Trinitarian understanding of God's revelation to humanity.

### BAPTISMAL DECORUM

Baptisms, by definition, are the entry points into the people of God. It is a sacred moment in the life of the one being baptized but it is also a sacred moment for the family of God who receives this new child of God. Accordingly, all baptisms will occur in the context of the Sunday worship service where the people of God gather. The only exception to this rule will be a case of life-threatening emergency.

We ask that all involved in the process of baptism (parents, sponsors, extended family, congregation members) respect the worship atmosphere created to honor God as our Father. Wherever possible, we ask that all participate in the songs, responses, and prayers as indicated in the worship book and the bulletin.

We all want to remember special moments in our lives. One way of recording such events is through photography and videotape. Photography is allowed only under the following rules.

1. Once the service has begun we ask that no one move about to seek out locations from which to take photographs. Such movement detracts from and disrupts the solemnity of the service.
2. No flash pictures are allowed while the baptism is in process.

3. Videotaping of the baptism will be allowed only from stationary positions in the balcony and the rear of the sanctuary.
4. Staged poses of the baptism will be granted for photos following the worship service upon request.
5. It is the responsibility of the family of the baptized to make certain that everyone invited to attend the ceremony understands the requirements of Zion's regarding this matter.

#### *ZION ELC'S POST-BAPTISMAL CARE AND CONCERN FOR CHILDREN*

*Children baptized at Zion will be registered on the church Cradle Roll and encouraged to attend Sunday School.*

*The Pastor, Cradle Roll leader, Sunday School Superintendent, Sunday School Teachers and Youth Leaders will attempt to keep in touch with baptized children and their families. Parents promise to bring up their children in the Christian faith and should model faithful church participation for them.*

#### *ADMINISTRATION OF THIS BAPTISMAL POLICY*

*This baptismal policy will be administered by the Pastor in consultation with the Parish Administrator and in consultation with the Executive Council when the Pastor deems it necessary. Baptisms will be reported to the Council, in advance if feasible.*

Adopted by Council - March 11, 2008  
*Revisions adopted by Council:*