



THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Missouri Synod

Office of the President  
The Reverend Doctor Matthew C. Harrison  
President of the Synod

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Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

Preaching on Epiphany and the Baptism of Christ, Luther commented upon the words of Mark's Gospel, "And when he came up from the water, immediately he [Jesus] saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove" (Mark 1:10). Preached the Reformer, "In Baptism, heaven is nothing but doors and windows!"

You have before you, dear reader, another tremendously helpful and concise document, this time taking up a topic the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) has not taken up previously in such a direct and fulsome manner. Baptism is full of the most wonderful consolation for Christians. And as our Lord Himself stated, Baptism is for "all nations."

This document is suitable for individual or group study. It will serve as a great witness to Christ and to Holy Baptism for those who have struggled with various aspects of this biblical teaching.

There is a broad misunderstanding among many of how one becomes a Christian — so deeply rooted in individuals, cultures and religions is the idea that we have "free will" in spiritual matters and must thus participate in our salvation by doing something, even if merely making a decision for Jesus. But wherever man must do something to be saved, salvation is rendered uncertain because the human mind, will and actions are always unstable, and such ideas are diametrically opposed to the cardinal teaching of the New Testament, that salvation is a "gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

That the LCMS should, in these "gray and latter days," be gifted with such clear and biblical teaching on Baptism is cause for the humblest thanks and joy.

"Baptism, which corresponds to this [Noah's Ark], now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is the appeal, and in Baptism we are saved and connected to Jesus and His resurrection. That's solid and repeated New Testament teaching.

We thank CTCR Chairman Rev. Dr. Larry Rast, executive staff Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer and Rev. Larry Vogel, and the whole CTCR for their work.

Thanks be to God!

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President  
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