

Liturgy

The First Sunday after the Epiphany
The Baptism of the Lord

CALL TO WORSHIP

Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

GATHERING

Leader:

Lord, open our lips, and our mouths shall proclaim Your praise.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be ages unto ages. Amen.**

Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness!*

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
The God of glory thunders!

*The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning;
His voice shakes the wilderness!*

**The voice of the LORD is powerful, and full of majesty.
In His temple all say, "Glory!"**

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood,
Yes, the LORD sits enthroned as King forever.

The LORD will give strength to His people.
The LORD will bless His people with peace.

Come, let us sing His praise, and give thanks to His holy name.

– from Psalm 29

All Creatures of Our God and King

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam;
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
Ye clouds that sail in heav'n along:
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice;
Ye lights of evening, find a voice.
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
Make music for thy Lord to hear:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou fire, so masterful and bright,
Thou givest man both warmth and light,
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Text: St. Francis of Assisi, c. 1225; transl. William H. Draper, 1919.
Music: *Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Cologne, 1623; hymn tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN.

*LECTIONARY for the first Sunday
after the Epiphany, Year A:*

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

This first Sunday following the day of Epiphany is traditionally the day we focus on the Baptism of the Lord. The liturgical season of Epiphany, a varying period of between four and nine Sundays, is a time set aside to look closely at the Person and Work of Jesus, the Son of God who came to earth to accomplish the redemption and reconciliation of all of creation back to the Creator.

As we focus on Christ's baptism in our worship, we must be amazed and awed at the theological richness and beauty of this event. For here we not only see Jesus identifying with human-kind in our human nature as He steps into the waters of the Jordan. We also see a vivid picture of the Trinity, as the Father publicly announces and identifies Jesus as "my Son, whom I love," and the Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove. As we move through the worship service, what are the implications we see and experience for our walk of faith and our being increasingly more formed in the image of Christ?

The Gathering antiphonal reading, taken from the Psalm text for today, is written for a leader (pastor, cantor, etc.) and two readers or groups. Beginning with the familiar prayer of Invocation of Psalm 51:15, followed by the words of Gloria Patri (also referred to as the "lesser doxology"), it immediately brings our attention to the Trinity.

You may hear a sung setting of the Gloria Patri in the Audio Media Studio section of the Music Room.

Here are the links:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/gloria-patri>

https://clerestorynotes.com/live/content/music_library/gloria-patri-clip

INVOCATION

Prayers of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for God's presence

All Creatures of Our God and King

Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship Him in humbleness: O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One.
O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Amen

Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen. (Sing it over ...)

See the little baby (amen), Lyin' in a manger (amen),
On Christmas morning – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him in the temple (amen), Talkin' to the elders (amen),
Who marvel at His wisdom – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him at the Jordan (amen), Where John was baptizin' (amen),
And the Spirit came upon Him – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him at the sea side (amen), Preachin' and healin' (amen)
The blind and the feeble – Amen, amen, amen.

See Him in the garden (amen), Prayin' to His Father (amen),
In deepest sorrow – Amen, amen, amen.

Then they crucified Him (amen), Jesus, our Savior (amen),
And He rose on Easter! Amen, amen, amen.

Hallelujah! (amen), He died to save us (amen),
And He lives forever - Amen, amen, amen. Amen, amen, amen.

Public domain. Words and music: traditional African-American spiritual.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

Let us together affirm the testimony of the apostle Peter:

God shows no partiality:

**But in every nation anyone who fears Him
and does what is right is accepted by Him.**

This is the message God sent,
announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ,
who is Lord of all.

**This message spread throughout Judea,
beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced:
that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth
with the Holy Spirit and with power;
He went about doing good
and healing all who were oppressed by the devil,
for God was with Him.**

And yet they put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree.

**But God raised Him to life on the third day
and revealed Him to those who were chosen by God as witnesses,
and who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.**

He is the One ordained by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

**Of Him all the prophets bear witness
that everyone who believes in Him
receives forgiveness of sins through His name.**

—based on Acts 10:34-43

This is an interesting, fun, and (perhaps) unexpected medley of a classic hymn with a traditional spiritual that reflects the whole story of God while placing the Baptism of Christ at the center of the song.
- Performance tip: sing this verse of All Creatures of Our God and King in the key of C. Ritard as usual the last "alleluia," then begin the intro (tempo and rhythmic change) right on the last syllable, "-ia!" Modulate the verses of Amen up by half-steps as desired.

The Profession of Faith, drawn from today's lectionary text in Acts 10, is a responsive reading of Peter's sermon to those gathered at the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius in Caesarea. It reminds us not only of the Person and Work of Christ, but that Jesus' public ministry began with His baptism.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

The call and promise of the Lord:

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean;

I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;
and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh,
and give you a heart of flesh.

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

– Ezekiel 36:25-27

Eternal and merciful God,

You have loved us with a love beyond our understanding,
and You have set us on paths of righteousness for Your name’s sake.
Yet we have strayed from Your way.

[Silence]

We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed,
through what we have done and what we have left undone,
and we have wandered from Your pathway.

[Silent confessions]

**As we remember the cleansing water of baptism, O God,
we praise You and give You thanks that You forgive us yet again.
Grant us now, we pray, the grace to die daily to sin,
and to rise daily to new life in Christ,
who lives and reigns with You,
and in whose strong name we pray. Amen.**

Whiter Than Snow

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
I want You forever to live in my soul.
Break down ev’ry idol, cast out ev’ry foe.
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus, look down from Your throne in the skies,
And help me to make a complete sacrifice.
I give up myself and whatever I know;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus, before You I patiently wait;
Come now and within me a new heart create.
To those who have sought You, You never said no.
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2014 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Text: James Nicholson; Music: William G. Fischer

The call to Confession text is not part of today’s lectionary, but it does remind us of God’s promise to cleanse us and His expectation of our repentance and commitment to follow His path.

This prayer comes from a wonderful resource, “True Confession: Ideas for recovering a true spirit of confession in worship,” originally published in Reformed Worship: Resources for Planning and Leading Worship, RW:52 (spaces for silence and silent confessions added).

*It is available on line at:
<https://www.reformedworship.org/resource/true-confession-ideas-recovering-true-spirit-confession-worship>
(accessed 7 January 2026)*

Music for Ellen’s setting of Whiter Than Snow is available in the music catalog as a lead sheet.

Here’s a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/whiter-snow>

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,
He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness,
but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration
and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly
through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace
we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This is a trustworthy saying!

– Titus 3:4-5

Thanks be to God!

TIME OF OFFERING

Words and prayers of thanksgiving and praise

God of heaven and earth,
You call us to come in humility before You,
bringing the offering of our very selves.
As You revealed Jesus to be Your Son in His baptism,
so You claimed our lives in baptism,
that we might walk in newness of life.

**Accept all we have and all we are, O God,
as expressions of our devotion, love and worship.
May Your presence flow through us always.**

Let the Rain of Your Presence

Let the rain of Your presence fall on me
Every day that I live, with every breath I breathe;
Let the rain of Your presence fall on me
Everywhere that I go, Lord, let Your presence flow;
Rain on me.

Love divine, joy unspeakable
Overflowing in my soul;
This heart of mine is refreshed and at rest
In Your presence, in Your presence.

CCLI Song #1606354 ©1994 Praise On The Rock Music; Danny Chambers

THE WORD

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

THE TABLE

Remembering the Body of Christ

The Lord be with you! **And also with you!**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again!**

We often use this contemporary classic here, at Offering, on Baptism of the Lord Sunday.

An alternate choice of song for this space in the liturgy is More Like Jesus (CCLI Song #7105732 ©SHOUT! Music Publishing | sixsteps Music | worshiptogether.com songs. Brooke Ligertwood, Scott Ligertwood, Kristian Stanfill, Brett Younker). Using More Like Jesus brings our focus to what it meant that Christ identified with humanity in His baptism, and what it means and requires of us when we respond to His coming and His sacrifice.

Our Father in Heaven (sung)

Our Father in heaven,
Your name is holy,
Your name is holy, our Father.
Your kingdom come,
And Your will be done
Here on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us, we pray,
Our bread for today,
Our debts forgive
And in turn we will live,
Forgiving of what others owe.
Keep us from trials;
Save us from our ancient foe!

As we sing the kingdom,
We sing the power,
We sing the glory be Yours –
Forever. Amen. Amen. Amen!

Words: Chris Alford. Music: Chris Alford and Ellen Koehler .
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Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Come, Thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace.
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of God's redeeming love.

Hitherto Thy love has blest me,
Thou hast brought me to this place.
And I know Thy hand will bring me
Safely home by Thy good grace.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He to rescue me from danger
Bought me with His precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be.
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

Text: Robert Robinson, 1757. Hymn tune: NETTLETON; traditional American melody,
John Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music*, 1813
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Music for this setting of the Lord's Prayer, Our Father in Heaven, is available in the sheet music catalog as a lead sheet, and as a solo/melody line with piano accompaniment on request.

Here's a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/our-father-heaven>

Music for Ellen's setting of Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing is available in the music catalog as a lead sheet and scored for three-part vocal harmony ("vocals").

Here's the link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/come-thou-fount-every-blessing>

Other songs with obvious resonance with the image of water and the theme of baptism:

Flow Like a River (CCLI Song #2989523 ©2000 Integrity's Hosanna! Music. Steve Merkel);

Living Water (©1996 Diadem Music Publishing, Bob Carlisle and Randy Thomas); and

I Can Hear Your Voice (CCLI Song #3926011 ©2002 Smittyfly Music/Word Music LLC; Debbie Smith, Michael W. Smith Whitney Smith): "I'm in the river that flows from Your throne, water of life, water of life, ..."

SENDING FORTH
The Life of the Body

All Creatures of Our God and King (Doxology)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below:
O Praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly hosts;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Benediction:

God the Father, who sent His Spirit upon His Son,
bless you with the presence of His Spirit.

Amen.

Jesus, who received the Spirit and manifested the Father,
abide in you and make you a manifestation of His life.

Amen.

And God the Spirit, who came upon Christ in the fullness of power,
empower you to live in the pattern of baptismal spirituality
revealed in Jesus.

To the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen! Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

A thought about worship...— “The baptized life is a life that is lived in the *pattern of death and resurrection*. . . . The way of being in Jesus, the way of living the new resurrected life, is through participation. . . . We participate in Christ by living the life of our baptism into his death and resurrection. This is a daily, existential, moment-by-moment experience as we choose in this or that situation to die to the sins for which Christ died and choose the life of the Spirit for which Christ was raised to a new life.” (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004], 146-147.)

Lectionary for next week: Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

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Singing the final, doxological verse of our Gathering hymn is a powerful reinforcement of the picture of the Trinity seen in the Baptism of Christ, and sends us out into the world to love and serve Him in great joy!