



# **Baptism**

## **Coming to the Font**

Published especially for use in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), by CMP, a ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, Kentucky.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. Every effort has been made to trace copyrights on the materials included in this book. If any copyrighted material has nevertheless been included without permission and due acknowledgment, proper credit will be inserted in future printings after notice has been received.

Excerpts from *Book of Order* and *Book of Confessions* have been used throughout this resource. Both are reprints with permission of the Office of the General Assembly.

© 2016 CMP, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, Louisville, KY. All rights reserved. Except where permission to photocopy is expressly granted on the material, no part of these materials may be reproduced without permission from the publisher.

Printed in the U.S.A.

[pcusa.org/beingreformed](http://pcusa.org/beingreformed)

---

**Ronald P. Byars** served as pastor of Presbyterian congregations for over three decades, until he joined the faculty of Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, as professor of preaching and worship. He has written extensively about worship and contributed the section on the Service for the Lord's Day to *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship*. Among his books are *Christian Worship*, *Lift Your Hearts On High: Eucharistic Prayer in The Reformed Tradition*, and *The Sacraments in Biblical Perspective*. He is retired and lives in Lexington, Kentucky.

**Eva Stimson**, a graduate of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education (now Union Presbyterian Seminary), is a freelance writer and editor, an oil painter, and the former editor of *Presbyterians Today*. She is a ruling elder, Sunday school teacher, and member of Crescent Hill Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Eva wrote the sessions for group study.

**Donald K. McKim** is the editor for *Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding*, an adult curriculum of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). He also serves as editor of *The Present Word*. Dr. McKim is an honorably retired Presbyterian minister who has been an editor for Westminster John Knox Press, a seminary theology professor, an academic dean, and a pastor. He is the author and editor of a number of books on Reformed theology, including *Introducing the Reformed Faith*; *Presbyterian Beliefs: A Brief Introduction*; *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*; *More Presbyterian Questions, More Presbyterian Answers*; and the *Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology*. He lives with his wife, LindaJo McKim, in Germantown, Tennessee. They have two married children and two grandchildren.





# Baptism

## Coming to the Font

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction.....                                      | 3   |
| Ways of Using This Workbook.....                       | 5   |
| Section 1: Remember Your Baptism .....                 | 7   |
| Remember   |     |
| Jesus' Baptism   |     |
| For the Forgiveness of Sins                            |     |
| Lifelong Repentance                                    |     |
| Section 2: Through the Waters .....                    | 19  |
| Healing Water  |     |
| Creation from Watery Chaos                             |     |
| Noah's Ark   |     |
| Crossing the Sea                                       |     |
| Section 3: Death and Resurrection .....                | 31  |
| Death  |     |
| Death and Resurrection                                 |     |
| A Change of Clothes                                    |     |
| Renunciations  |     |
| Section 4: He Will Baptize with the Holy Spirit.....   | 43  |
| Baptism and the Holy Spirit                            |     |
| Anointing  |     |
| Seal   |     |
| Living Water   |     |
| Section 5: You Did Not Choose Me but I Chose You ..... | 55  |
| Infant Baptism   |     |
| "Second" Generations                                   |     |
| Let the Kids Decide for Themselves                     |     |
| You Did Not Choose Me . . .                            |     |
| Section 6: Initiation into the Church .....            | 67  |
| God's Decision   |     |
| Baptized Members                                       |     |
| Indiscriminate Baptism                                 |     |
| New Creation   |     |
| Section 7: For Parents and Children .....              | 91  |
| Sessions for Group Study .....                         | 99  |
| Suggestions for Further Study.....                     | 125 |





# Introduction

The Sacrament of Baptism is the beginning of the Christian life. Whether we think of infant or adult baptism, the Sacrament marks our entrance into the church and the life of faith in Jesus Christ.

We are familiar with baptism since in worship services we see parents presenting babies for baptism and adults who come to be baptized as they confess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We sense the seriousness of this Sacrament, but also its joy. New disciples are being added to the body of Christ. Babies grow into children who confess their faith at confirmation. Adults who become part of the church's fellowship participate in the church's life and ministries as they attend worship and serve Christ.

So baptism is important. It is life-changing! It gives one a completely new orientation for living. It sets directions for the life of faith and launches us on a mission of being disciples of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Baptism is the beginning. It is an action of the church for us, but that one event has ongoing, continuing significance for us throughout our lives.

The following study helps us prepare for baptism. It reminds us that our baptism is to be remembered. It is a sign of our identity as Christian persons, those united with Christ by faith. It is an action in the past that focuses us in the present and opens a vision of the future as we love and serve Christ in and through the church. The images of baptism: water, death and resurrection, reception of the Holy Spirit, and God's gracious choosing of us as God's people—all these are filled with meaning, as this study shows. There is a fullness to baptism which "fills up" our Christian lives in the church. Baptism marks us as Christ's disciples. Baptism affects all areas of our lives and gives an ongoing sense of the presence of Jesus Christ with us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through all times and seasons of our lives, we remember that as we have been "baptized into Christ" so we are "clothed" with Christ (Galatians 3:27).

As we prepare ourselves and our children for baptism, we are led to praise and joy that we "are called to belong to Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:6)!

Donald K. McKim  
Editor







# Ways of Using This Workbook

In some congregations, baptisms are frequent, and in others, rare to nonexistent. People both outside the church and in are often confused about the meaning of baptism, and efforts to clear up that confusion are sometimes missing or haphazard. Some think of baptism as necessary for any hope of heaven, while others think of it as a charming way to introduce a child to the world. Neither of these preconceptions represents the teaching of the church. The “meaning” (better, “meanings”) of the Sacrament are richer than those with only casual familiarity with Christian baptism might imagine. The purpose of this workbook is to introduce or to review some of the ways the church understands its own Sacrament, drawing from both Scripture and the experience and reflection of the historic church. This resource might be used:

- by worship committees and sessions considering the baptismal practices of their congregation
- with persons or groups of expectant parents and grandparents who are looking forward to the birth of their child or grandchild and are ready to consider the prospect of the spiritual formation of the new generation
- for ministers or other church officers to use with persons or groups of church members who have requested baptism for a child
- for pastors working with unchurched parents who have inquired about the availability of baptism
- for those leading confirmation classes
- for those working with classes for new members or inquirers
- for adults who have not been baptized and are seeking membership in the church
- with the parents of children recently baptized or with adults recently baptized
- with groups small or large, or with individuals, who wish to understand the church’s teaching better
- for all-church retreats or programs for Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men, youth groups, or UKirk
- with those who have inquired about the anniversary date of their own baptism, or that of their offspring, recorded in the archives of the congregation.

This resource may be used in different ways: as a self-guided study, as a group study, and as a ready reference for personal reflection. For a self-guided study, simply start at the beginning, reading the articles and completing the activities at your own pace, perhaps meeting regularly with a friend or two. For a group study, suggested lesson plans are offered under Sessions for Group Study (see p. 99).

May God bless you in your life of faith and in the ministries of Jesus Christ.



# Remember Your Baptism

Whether considering baptism for your child or yourself, or examining the meaning of baptism for renewed Christian discipleship, one thing is true for Presbyterians—we believe that God has called you to this moment. That’s right—*called*. The *Book of Order*, part of our church’s constitution, tells us:

In Jesus Christ, God calls people to faith and to membership in the Church, the body of Christ. (*Book of Order*, G-1.0301)

God has actively led you to and is leading you beyond this point. The *Book of Order* delineates the dimensions of God’s call to you:

God calls a people

- a. to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- b. to follow Jesus Christ in obedient discipleship;
- c. to use the gifts and abilities God has given, honoring and serving God
  - (1) in personal life,
  - (2) in household and families,
  - (3) in daily occupations,
  - (4) in community, nation, and the world. (*Book of Order*, W-5.6001)

What does *being called* by God in Christ signify to you?

---



---



---

Notice the verbs in our response to God’s call (*believe*, *follow*, and *use* gifts and abilities, [see *Book of Order*, W-5.6001]). What do the verbs tell you about the character of Christian discipleship as expressed through being a member of a Presbyterian church?

---



---



---

Turn the page, and read Ron Byars’s article on remembering baptism.





## Remember

The baptismal service in the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship (BCW)* includes a charge to the congregation: “Let us remember with joy our own baptism . . .” The services for Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant make the same charge: “Remember!”

Some of us recall our baptisms, because we were old enough to know what was happening and to fix it in our memory. Others have no memory of the occasion, and we are uncertain how to take the charge to remember our baptism. Does our baptism lack something if we have no memory of the moment?

Do you remember your birthday? None of us can recall being born, but we know it happened! What we “remember” on our birthday is that we were born on a certain day of a certain year, and that the fact of our birth is cause for celebrating the gift of our own life. So it may be with baptism. It does not matter that we cannot recall the event. Maybe we have family stories, or a baptismal

certificate stored away somewhere. Or your family may be like the one in which a grandfather writes a letter to each of his children and grandchildren on the anniversary of their baptisms. Maybe you were given a baptismal gift: a candle to relight on the anniversary; an embroidered towel used at the font; a cradle cross; a photo; or a card sent to honor the newly baptized. Or maybe you cherish a faded family memory, or might even be able to locate an entry recorded in the archives of a congregation.

Martin Luther, in times of great trial, reminded himself that he was baptized, and it caused him to take heart. Baptized as an infant, he had no firsthand recollection of the moment, but he “remembered” it: he embraced and cherished the fact of it. This is what it means when the minister says to the congregation, “Remember your baptism, and be thankful.” Cherish the fact of it, and let the certainty of it strengthen your confidence that God has been, is now, and will be faithful.

**My thoughts and feelings about my baptism:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Remember your baptism. Write your memories or tell your story to a friend. What was most significant about your baptism? If you were a child at the time, what did your family tell you about your baptism?

---

---

---

If you are a parent, do you celebrate the anniversary of your child's baptism? Tell stories about it? Show pictures taken on that day?

---

---

---

How might you help your baptized child to relate his or her developing faith to the "remembered" baptism?

---

---

---

Read Mark 1:1–11, 1 John 1:10, and Acts 22:1–16. Write your initial thoughts about each passage.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Jesus' Baptism

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan” (Mark 1:9). Although all four of the Gospels tell of Jesus’ baptism, none of them describes exactly how it was done. The Gospel authors were not writing for later generations. They presumed that their readers required no detailed descriptions. It may be that Jesus was submerged in the water. Or, it may be that the frescoes and other early artistic renderings of the event accurately depict him standing in the water while John pours water over his head. The earliest baptismal pools would have been adequate for this purpose.

The *Didache*, a second-century document, offers options: “Running water” is preferred—cold if possible, but warm will do. If you have neither, then pour water on the head three times, “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Old Testament rites for purification probably served as precedents for John’s baptism. One requires that a person “bathe” the body in water (Leviticus 14:9), while another uses the image of “sprinkling” clean water (Ezekiel 36:25). While the Greek word for baptize can mean to dip or immerse, it can also mean simply “to wash.”

All four Gospels testify that, at Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him; and Matthew, Mark, and Luke all report a voice from heaven, identifying Jesus as “my Son, the Beloved.” At this very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, Scripture records the presence and interaction of Spirit, Father, and Son. In the early church, the baptism of Jesus served as the

model for Christian baptism, and Jesus himself directed the disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .” (Matthew 28:19).

The baptisms that we have experienced and “remember” personally are linked to the baptism of Jesus. In our baptisms, we are drenched in and washed by the Holy Spirit “so that your sins may be forgiven” (Acts 2:38). “Sin” is not a word that comes easily to twenty-first century folks! We recognize that human beings are fallible and often fall short of an ideal, but we are more accustomed to the use of psychological language when people take a wrong turn. However, “sin” is something other than fallibility, a maladjustment to be treated with therapy, and more than a chronic or occasional moment of moral weakness that pops up in you and me here and there, now and then. Sin is not limited to “bad” people who sell drugs to kids or initiate acts of violence. Even well-adjusted people with sterling reputations are sinners. Sin (singular) is a condition rather than a list of particular lines we are not supposed to cross. Sin might better be described as a powerful force at work within everyone who has ever lived as well as in human communities in all their interwoven complexity.

One of the symptoms of “sin” is that it so easily masquerades as virtue. For example, it’s not wrong to want to make a life for oneself in the world, or to provide as much as we can for those we love, or to be proud of whatever communities we are part of, as long

as those desires are not swollen out of proportion. Even those needs and wants we pursue with benign intentions become ugly when magnified and distorted by fear, anger, or insecurity that lead to efforts to guarantee our own well-being no matter the cost to others. An aggressive and defensive self-interest is a telltale marker of the way

sin is manifested throughout the whole network of the human community, and no one escapes it. The Sacrament of Baptism embodies God's promise, in Christ, to claim us for God's own dominion, challenging any other claim to dominion over us, including that of sin itself.

What is the significance of water in baptism? How is water used for baptisms in your congregation? In other traditions?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

How does Dr. Byers' explanation of "sin" compare to your view? How does imagining of "sin" as a condition influence your understanding of grace?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





## For the Forgiveness of Sins

The Gospel of Mark tells us that “John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4). People from all over Judea heard about John’s ministry in the desolate Jordan River country, and they flocked to hear him preach. His searing words struck home, and they felt deep regret for their sins and the corporate sins that afflicted the whole community, and they lined up to be baptized, earnestly seeking a sign of God’s forgiveness.

The fact that John was baptizing those who repented in order that their sins might be forgiven raises puzzling questions when we consider Jesus’ baptism. Was Jesus a sinner? Did he answer John’s call to repent? Was he baptized “for the forgiveness of sins”? That does not fit our understanding (or the Bible’s understanding) of Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews declares that Jesus was “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15), and this has always been the conviction of the church.

Jesus’ entire ministry testifies to the fact that he was not embarrassed about associating with sinners. He reached out to those whom his society considered to be sinners and outcasts, even breaking taboos by sharing meals with them, no matter that his enemies used this against him. When he was crucified, Jesus suffered a death that the Old Testament considered to be a curse (Deuteronomy 21:22–23), which meant that even in his dying, he was lumped with sinners. This should come as no surprise. At the very beginning

of his ministry, Jesus had signaled his solidarity with sinners by lining up with the penitent and joining them in the waters of baptism. He deliberately took his place alongside all of us—not to approve of the brokenness that distorts our lives and our life together, but as an act of solidarity with people who need an awful burden lifted. It is the sick, not those who are well, who need a physician.

God acts in baptism to assure us that God is strong enough and determined enough and gracious enough to challenge and overcome sin’s power to have the last word in our lives, and will go to whatever lengths necessary to free us and heal us, just as Jesus freed and healed persons in Galilee and Judea. Indeed, the Apostles’ Creed, drawing upon the New Testament, testifies that he even “descended into hell” (1 Peter 4:6) in search of those imprisoned there. Our baptism enables us to see ourselves through the eyes of One who loves us—not to entitle us to feel smug or superior, but to wash us in God’s gracious mercy that relentlessly keeps on searching for everybody who is far off. This is the gift that we cherish in remembering the fact of our baptism.

Similarly, the church—all the baptized together—is immersed in the life of the world, for better and for worse. Baptism is a different kind of cleansing. It is not about isolating the baptized for the sake of guarding our purity, but a kind of personal and group ordination. Baptism is a

commission to share in the collective ministry of the church that unites us in seeking the blessing of “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3). As in

Jesus’ life, such a commission involves not protecting our “purity” as much as it requires taking risks.

What does it mean to you to be baptized “for the forgiveness of sins”?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

In what ways have you experienced baptism as a “cleansing”?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Lifelong Repentance

Does baptism wash away only those sins that preceded baptism? What about sins committed after baptism? Among the first Christians, the issue of post-baptismal sins posed no problem, because it was not presumed that repentance or forgiveness ended on the day we were baptized. Neither repentance nor baptismal pardon were understood to be limited only to the moment in which the baptism occurred, but were recognized as extending over the whole length of our lives. However, as early as the late second century, some believers began to advocate delaying baptism for fear that it marked forgiveness only for past sins. They intended to postpone it until old age had caused passions to fade and appetites to mellow. Eventually the Roman Catholic Church instituted the Sacrament of Penance (confession to a priest followed by absolution) as a remedy for post-baptismal sins. The Reformed tradition, however, recovered the earlier conviction that repentance and baptismal grace mark the whole Christian life.

Baptism identifies the Christian life as one to be lived under grace, continually and joyfully dependent on the astonishing mercy of God, exhibited and made manifest in Jesus Christ. Being baptized does not immunize us from our humanity, as though we could be forever exempt from the forces that disfigure human life and relationships. Luther observed that, while we are forgiven, we are, at one

and the same time, sinners. One status does not exclude the other. The distinct identity of the baptized is that we know ourselves to be both, and throughout our lifetimes we both confess our sins and thank God for pardon already given in the cross, before we even ask for it.

The Christian discipline that calls for a lifetime of self-awareness that includes repentance and thanksgiving is represented in public worship by the Prayer of Confession. In the Reformed tradition, the Prayer of Confession is normally located early in the service, just as baptism is located at the beginning of the Christian life. We confess our sins not in an attempt to qualify for pardon, but because we know ourselves already pardoned. We do not confess in craven fear, or expecting to win some concession from God because we have put on a humble face. Our confession is made in confidence that God is for us, not against us, recalling our baptism as God's solemn promise that that is so. "You have been marked as Christ's own forever."

Sometimes it seems as though the sins mentioned in the Prayer of Confession have nothing to do with us. Even though those who know us best might have another opinion, it is well to remind ourselves that our communal confession is offered not only for ourselves, but for all the people who belong to the church but are not present, or who don't go to church at

all, and for all the people who have no idea that they have anything to confess. The confession is followed by a Declaration of Forgiveness, boldly stated, because the mercy of God is not a matter for uncertainty. Our confidence rests on Christ crucified, risen, ascended, and praying for us.

Every service of confession and pardon is intimately related to our baptism, and might well be led from the baptismal font. Similarly, the service may be begun and ended from the font. "Remember your baptism, and be thankful!"

One characteristic of the power of sin in the human race is that we resist recognizing it in ourselves. What frequently *unrecognized* manifestations of sin might appropriately be confessed in the Prayer of Confession?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Just as it may be hard to recognize the power of sin in ourselves and our own communities, it may be equally hard to believe that God really forgives us. Why so hard?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **For Your Reflection and Action**

1. How does your church record the names and dates of baptisms that take place in your congregation?
2. How might the link between baptism and Confession and Pardon be made larger and more evident in your congregation?
3. When do members of your congregation have the opportunity to learn about and reflect on baptism (and Confession and Pardon) outside of worship?
4. Find out, if possible, the date of your own baptism, and the baptismal dates of closest family members. Write a note to a family member to be sent on the anniversary of her or his baptism.
5. Research the names of persons who were baptized in your church within the last two years, and commit to praying for them daily by name. Add the names of the newly baptized as their baptisms occur. Use the app Ceaseless to encourage your prayer commitment: [www.ceaselessprayer.com](http://www.ceaselessprayer.com).





# **Sessions for Group Study**





# Remember Your Baptism

## Scripture

Mark 1:1–11; 1 John 1:10; Acts 22:1–16

## Main Idea

God calls us to remember our baptism—even if we have no firsthand recollection of it—by cherishing the fact of it and letting the certainty of it strengthen our confidence in God’s faithfulness.

## Teaching Points

The session invites participants to consider:

1. How our baptisms are linked to the baptism of Jesus.
2. What it means to be baptized “for the forgiveness of sins.”
3. That baptism acknowledges a lifelong process of repentance, confession, and forgiveness.

## You Will Need

Bibles  
Christ candle and lighter  
Bowl of water  
Newsprint and markers  
Pens or pencils  
One or more artists’ depictions of Jesus’ baptism  
Calendar to record dates of baptisms

## Leader Prep

Be aware that participants may bring a variety of experiences and understandings of baptism: some may have been baptized as infants or adults; others may be preparing for their own baptism or for the baptism of a child.

For Gather, set the Christ candle (a white pillar candle) and a bowl of water on a table in the center of your meeting space. Enlist participants to take turns lighting the candle and reading the opening Scripture.

For Head, familiarize yourself with “Remember,” “Jesus’ Baptism,” and “For the Forgiveness of Sins” (pp. 9–14). Participants will need pens and markers to use throughout this study as they write/draw “Baptism Stories” (pp. 79–89). Find one or more paintings of Jesus’ baptism on the internet or in an art book. Have available Bibles, newsprint, and markers for the small groups. Be prepared to help the groups compare the story of Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:1–11) with the account of Paul’s conversion and baptism (Acts 22:1–16).

Heart, familiarize yourself with “For the Forgiveness of Sins” and “Lifelong Repentance” (pp. 13–16) and 1 John 1:8–10. Think about how you would answer #2 and #3 on For Your Reflection and Action (p. 17). Spend some time reflecting on the liturgy and considering how your baptism is linked to the baptism of Jesus. Be prepared to help participants begin developing personal baptism stories (pp. 79–89).

For Hands, post a calendar on a bulletin board or wall. If each month is on a separate page, cut apart the pages and post them so all twelve months are visible. Plan how you will gather dates and names of persons baptized (see #1, 4, and 5 in For Your Reflection and Action, p. 17).

For Depart, be prepared to lead participants in naming and praying for those whose baptisms you are remembering and celebrating.

## **Leading the Session**

### **Gather**

- Invite participants to introduce themselves and share what they hope to gain from this study, especially if some are preparing to present a child for baptism or to be baptized themselves.
- Light the Christ candle.
- Read Mark 1:1–11.
- Pray together:

Holy God, you surround us with your generous mercy all our lives long. Help us to embrace this gift with all our hearts, and to be strengthened by it as we struggle to show your rule in our lives and in the world. We know the needs of our lives. We need your love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life. May we find your good gifts to us as giving life to us, even as in the waters of baptism. We pray for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

### **Head**

- Ask: *How many of you remember your baptisms? How many of you remember your birthdays?* Review “Remember” (p. 9). Ask: *What do you think it means to “remember your baptism”?*
- Explain that in this study you will be exploring how baptism makes us part of the biblical story of God and God’s people. Participants may use “Baptism Stories” (pp. 79–89) throughout the study to write and/or draw their own baptism or the baptism of a child. If the latter, they should tell the story in a way the child will understand when he or she is old enough to read or listen to it, such as what happened and how you felt.
- Recall the passage read in Gather (Mark 1:1–11), and view artists’ depictions of Jesus’ baptism. Review “Jesus’ Baptism” (pp. 11–12), noting that while Jesus’ baptism served as the model for Christian baptism in the early church, the Gospels do not tell us how it was done. Ask: *What is the significance of water in baptism? How is water used for baptisms in our congregation? In other traditions?*

- Form small groups, giving each group Bibles, newsprint, and markers. Ask them to read the story of Paul’s baptism in Acts 22:1–16 and compare it with the story of Jesus’ baptism, listing on newsprint similarities (for example, how baptism is described in Mark 1:4 and Acts 22:16) and differences (Paul was clearly sinful; Jesus was not). Have someone from each group report on the discussion. Ask: *What does it mean that Jesus was baptized “for the forgiveness of sins”?*

## Heart

- Have participants return to small groups and discuss #2 and #3 in For Your Reflection and Action (p. 17), referring to “For the Forgiveness of Sins” and “Lifelong Repentance” (pp. 13–16) and 1 John 1:8–10. Ask: *What does it mean to you to be baptized “for the forgiveness of sins”? How is repentance a lifelong process?* Have someone from each group report on the discussion.
- Turn to French Reformed Church Baptismal Liturgy (p. 56). Explain that this liturgy beautifully expresses the faithfulness and grace of God that are foundational to a Reformed understanding of baptism. Suggest they pray the prayer silently, inserting their own names where indicated.
- Invite participants to reflect on how their baptisms are linked to the baptism of Jesus, recording insights on “Baptism Stories” (pp. 79–89) in words or pictures.

## Hands

- Invite participants who remember the date of their own and/or family members’ baptisms to record them on “Baptism Stories” (pp. 79–89) and on the calendar you have posted. The prayer calendar will help them remember the baptisms of those in their families and congregation. Suggest they research dates they can’t remember and plan a way to celebrate these baptisms, as suggested in For Your Reflection and Action #4 (p. 17).
- Call attention to For Your Reflection and Action #1 (p. 17). If nobody knows how your church records baptisms, recruit volunteers to ask your pastor or clerk of session. Ask them to bring to the next session a list of persons baptized in your congregation within the last two years so you can add them to the calendar and pray for them.

## Depart

- Light the Christ candle.
- Offer a closing prayer. Invite participants to name persons whose baptisms they remember. Close by saying together: “Thank you, God, for marking us Christ’s own forever.”
- Invite each participant to touch the water in the bowl and say to someone else, “Remember your baptism, and be thankful.”

