

BAPTISMAL MINISTRY



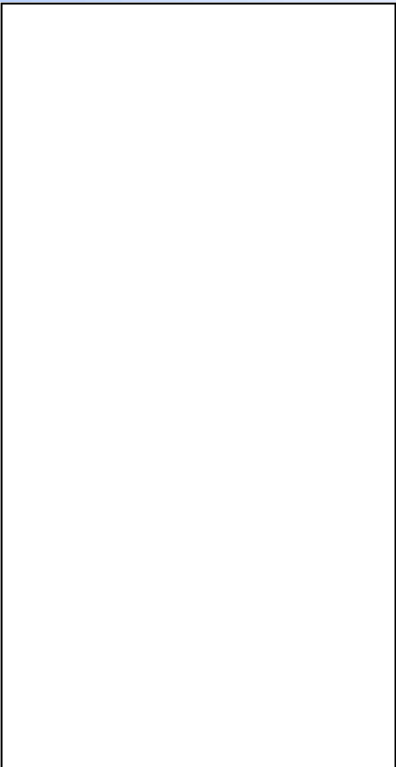
“We need leaders in the church—and I insist that every baptized person is a Christian leader somewhere—who know how to lay down their lives for others.

We need leaders who are engaged in daily ministry in the world, we need ordained leaders, and we need those who blur the boundaries.”

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

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BAPTISMAL MINISTRY

Most simply put, “baptismal ministry” is a gift and a calling which Christians are given at Baptism.

But that is to put it over simply, for it is also a deep mystery with many layers of meaning. In our Baptism, we enter into a special new connection with God in Christ, a relationship of mutual commitment – of God to us and us to God – called a *covenant*.

This covenant is a personal relationship of mutual open-ended promise, sacramentally enacted and acknowledged in Baptism. None of us stands outside of this personal relationship with God in Christ. Our end of the covenant, our end of the mutual promise, is our ministry.

Thus, ministry first begins as a response at the deepest level of our being to God’s love toward us, to serve and spread abroad that love, and to discern and follow where God leads. As we respond and follow, we are enabled, gifted (equipped), and transformed to do and be the work of Christ in the world.

In the covenant enacted in our Baptism we are called into *the ministry of Christ* in the world, and we agree in response – in our baptismal vows – to do some very specific things to realize and implement it. In the baptismal covenant, God calls and we respond. In Baptism, we promise to

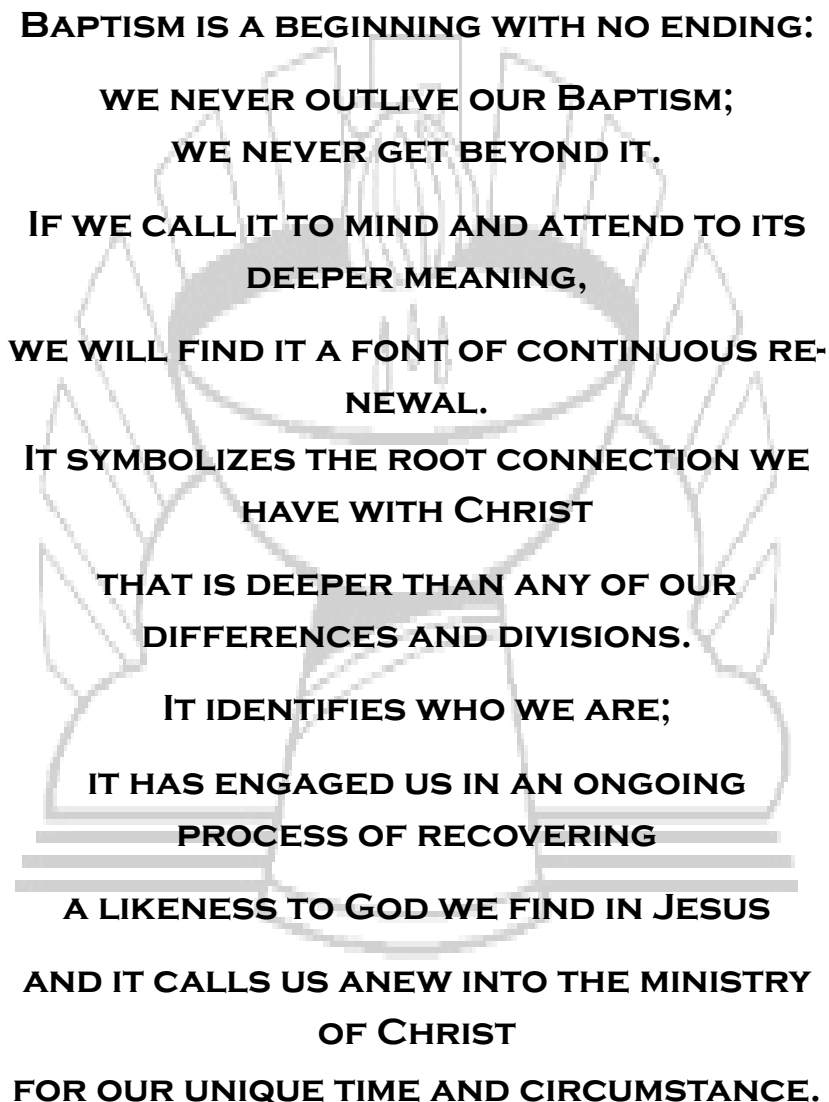
- Continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.
- Persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- Proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
- Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves.
- Strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

“Ministry grows out of the Body of Christ. We may not agree on the language to use in talking about that ministry—we hear terms like total ministry, mutual ministry, and ministry of all the baptized, but all ministry is grounded in baptism. If it’s going to be effective ministry, it has to recognize the connectedness of that Body, and express that awareness of collaboration.”

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

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BAPTISM



**BAPTISM IS A BEGINNING WITH NO ENDING:
WE NEVER OUTLIVE OUR BAPTISM;
WE NEVER GET BEYOND IT.
IF WE CALL IT TO MIND AND ATTEND TO ITS
DEEPER MEANING,
WE WILL FIND IT A FONT OF CONTINUOUS RE-
NEWAL.
IT SYMBOLIZES THE ROOT CONNECTION WE
HAVE WITH CHRIST
THAT IS DEEPER THAN ANY OF OUR
DIFFERENCES AND DIVISIONS.
IT IDENTIFIES WHO WE ARE;
IT HAS ENGAGED US IN AN ONGOING
PROCESS OF RECOVERING
A LIKENESS TO GOD WE FIND IN JESUS
AND IT CALLS US ANEW INTO THE MINISTRY
OF CHRIST
FOR OUR UNIQUE TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCE.**

SUGGESTED READINGS ON BAPTISMAL MINISTRY

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DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION FOR ALL PERSONS

The Early Church recognized itself as the community of saints on earth with each of its members empowered by the Spirit of God through baptism. It was a holy gathering of Christians dedicated to Christ. Like the Early Church, each Christian today is called to be Christ in the place in which she or he lives.

Thus, discernment of gifts and ministry for all believers becomes central and vital to the church's potential.

Ministry flows out of relationship with God and takes on varied and exciting forms: congregational, missional, and ordained. Regardless of titles, our work is to be Christ in and for the world.

We invite you to reflect on your service and ministry with the flow chart that follows, embracing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ, seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself, striving for justice and peace, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

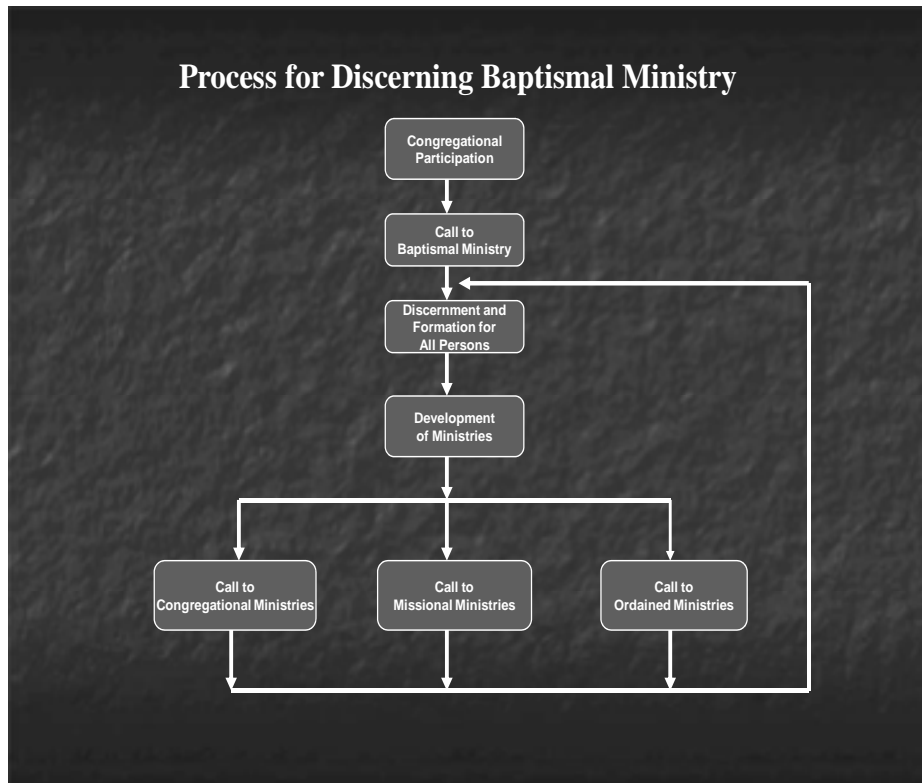
Out of our covenant relationship with God, sacramentally established in Baptism, all ministry emerges and flows, is sustained and renewed. In Baptism we are sacramentally authorized to be Christ's presence in the world. What shape that presence is to take is ours to discern and have formed in us. What follows from this renewed sense of Baptismal Ministry?

- All baptized believers are ministers.
- No ministry is more important than others at the deepest (Baptismal) level.
- The entire local Christian community is given / incorporated into the ministry of Christ's presence in the world; we are each part of the Body of Christ wherever we find ourselves. We serve Christ in others and are ourselves Christ's means of ministering to others – regardless of age, infirmity, ability, etc.

We need people who know how to give themselves and their ministries away. There's an old theological term, kenosis, that means emptying. It's most often used in reference to God becoming human. If we are made in the image of God, it should characterize our being as well. Our ministry needs to be kenotic. The ordained are called to be icons, models, but not the primary doers of ministry! Our job is to equip the saints, to provide formation, education, guidance, support, and then to get out of the way.

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

The Process of Discerning Baptismal Ministry, given below, is a flow chart indicating the dynamic process baptized Christians experience as they discern and identify their call, enter into formation, and develop their ministry within the community of faith, the Church. This is an ongoing, life-long process during which each person grows in and through their ministry or ministries, often moving into new challenges and opportunities.



*"You are God's viceroy, God's representative.
 You are God's stand-in, a God Carrier.
 You are precious; God depends on you.
 God believes in you and has no one but you
 To do the things that only you can do for God.
 Become what you are."*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Calling is a matter of discernment, taking into account gifts, skills, situation, and grace. Again, in the words of Presiding Bishop Katharine,

"Let's look at mission . . . more broadly. What's the mission of the Church? Why have we been sent (for that is what "mission" means)? Why has each one of us been put on this earth? To restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. It doesn't just mean the different parts of the Anglican Communion, it means all God's children and indeed all of creation. God's mission for us is to build the reign of God. That's why we're here. And if we're not doing that, the master has come home and caught us sleeping on the job.

What is your mission? What has the master sent you to do? Mission comes in as many different forms as there are Christians. Your mission right now may be as a parent, or a teacher, or a medical worker, or a student, or a guitarist, or a copy editor. Our mission at election time is to vote for the candidates we believe will work to make a more just society. At this time in the world's history, all of us have a mission to work and pray for peace—in Iraq, in Israel and Palestine, in the Sudan—wherever there is strife or division in human society."

CALL TO BAPTISMAL MINISTRY

Our Baptism is the abiding context for understanding all Christian ministry and our entire Christian life, a frame for making sense of it. In Baptism, all of us are called to ministry, the ministry of Christ now in us. This is our new identity in Christ, the new Eve and the new Adam. And as we revisit our Baptism (anamnesis, a remembering that makes present), new callings to ministry are given birth.

Baptism is an ongoing, life-long process during which each person grows in and through their ministry or ministries, often moving into new challenges and opportunities.

All the Baptized are ministers of Christ, called and gifted to be His Presence in the world.

"The ministry we received at baptism calls us to transform our communities into something that looks more like the reign of God. That is our mission, and it has shaped the way we understand what it means to be the Church."

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori