

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

January 3, 2024

Association Minister Message

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BELOVED. John The Baptist declares: *"I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* God declares: *"You are my Son, the BELOVED; with you I am well pleased."* Mark 1:8, 11). In just a few weeks, Jesus the baby is now Jesus the adult. In this passage from Mark, Jesus goes down to the River Jordan to be baptized by his second-cousin John. Jesus is not the only one there, for *"all the people of Jerusalem were going to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins."* (vs. 5).

This coming Sunday on the Christian calendar is *"The Baptism of Jesus Sunday."* In our tradition, most of us were baptized as infants. Questions asked of parents/sponsors/presenters include responsibility to teach the baptized individuals the way into living the Christian Faith. I am so grateful to my parents for telling me often about the day of my baptism and the importance of what it meant. (They also commented about the drama that happened during the worship service and baptism from relatives.) Those who participated in believers' baptism also need a reminder again and again of that time when the God's Spirit rested upon them. Whether *"sprinkled"* or *"dipped,"* baptism is God renewing us again and again. God is never finished with us, for God's embraces us with love and grace. We are God's *BELOVED!!!*

I greatly appreciate the Episcopal liturgy used on the Baptism of Jesus Sunday called *"Renewal of Baptism"* to remind the congregation of their baptism. It is not *"re-baptism"* or *"baptism"* but clearly *"a reminder"* that we/you/me have been united with God and the faith community in act of affirmation, inclusion, forgiveness, and love. Baptism reminds us that we are God's *BELOVED* and we belong and are part of a faith community who are all *BELOVED* by God. A friend sent a quote from Cathy Garza, *"Accessibility is being able to get in the building. Diversity is getting invited to the table. Belonging is having your voice heard at the table!"* Baptism declares that *"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here,"* no exceptions. Hear God speaking to us/you/me, *"You are my child, the BELOVED; with you I am well pleased."* BLESSINGS ALWAYS.