

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland Joint Declaration on Baptism

But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

(Tit. 3:4–5)

As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

(Gal. 3:27)

The New Testament writings testify to the early church's conviction that God has determined to bestow upon the world a new and immortal life by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to do the work of salvation for the benefit of humankind and all the world. The salvific work of the Triune God was effected in Christ's assumption of our humanity, his public activities, and his death and resurrection.

The human being becomes a partaker of salvation by being "clothed with Christ" in baptism. Baptism is in both churches a sacrament, or a mystery. In it God transfers the one baptised from death to life. Baptism is administered in the name of the Triune God using water, according to the command of the risen Christ: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Baptism joins an individual to the church, a community the New Testament describes as the body of Christ. As a confessing member of this community, the one baptised receives the grace to live a new life in Christ.

Established practices in both churches, and an insight into the importance of a common Christian witness in our country are based on our sharing of this faith and the understanding of the importance of baptism, which is its shoot. No member of either church who decides to join the other is rebaptised. In this sense, the churches recognise the validity of each other's baptism.

Our churches have common roots in the undivided Christendom of the first millennium. After that the doctrinal development has led in different directions. Therefore, we have also different views of baptism and how it is administered. These have been dealt with in our joint doctrinal discussions and in the report which will be published based on them.

Our churches' doctrinal discussions and the everyday coexistence of our members have prepared us for the formulation of this joint message concerning baptism. Today we encounter challenging questions regarding the transmission of the Christian heritage. The life-giving content of the baptism can remain less familiar to many. Together we want to witness to the gift of baptism and to encourage all to learn more about it.

Approved by the Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church of Finland 15th March 2022 and by the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 5th May 2022