“We believe in the Holy Spirit, ... and the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

In the beginning there was water. That's the way the Bible starts, remember. Genesis says, “In the beginning, when God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water.” That's all there was, water and Spirit. That's how the ancients often view the beginning of creation, that's what they believed was there before there was anything else, just God and water. Why water? Why do you think? What was there before creation? Have you ever wondered about that? We think about the Big Bang, but what was there before? Well, really there was no before, since that was the beginning not only of space but of time itself. That's where I don't get it, my little mind can't conceive of there being no space and no time. But the physicists with their brains greater than mine tell us that's what happened and my faith tells me that's when the Spirit of God washovering and the voice of God said, “Let there be light!” and everything began. But in the ancient mind, they didn't conceive of nothing, a great emptiness, but rather to them it was all water. Why water? To the ancients, water was a very important element, an important symbol. Water was obviously necessary for life. We don't survive very long without water, right? What is the longest you remember being thirsty? When I visit folks in the hospital before their surgeries, one of the difficult things is they usually have to avoid having any water after midnight on the day of their surgery. Sometimes this means going for ten or twelve hours without water. Everyone hates that. Do you remember being thirsty? Of not having water to drink? We need water.

But not only that. In a way, we are water. Biologists tell us that about 60% of our bodies are water. And if you take away our bones, it's even more than that. 75-80 % of our heart, our brains, our lungs
are water. We are made of water. And we need water to grow things too. The ancient peoples knew this as much as we do, but they had a harder time getting water than we do. They often lived near rivers or springs or sources of fresh water. But if they were following herds of game or seeking pasture for their flocks that often took them away from water and they had to depend on water from the sky in the forms of dew or rain to sustain them. We live in Michigan, we are blessed with a lot of fresh water. According to the USGS, 41% of the area of the state of Michigan is surface water, all fresh. Now compare that to Colorado, which is 0.4%. We have a lot of water. It is a great blessing. I know our gardens were running short on that blessing until the last couple of days. When there is not enough water, we know it.

But the ancients knew that water was not only a blessing, but was dangerous. They had no way to control it. Too much water could destroy fields and cities. Not enough water could cause drought and hunger. The sea was immense and uncontrollable. If you were brave enough to go out in a boat, you were at the mercy of the wind and the waves. Water was their symbol of what was there before creation because water was chaotic. It has no form of its own, it takes the shape of whatever container it happens to be in. The flood of Noah's time was God's decision to return to the pre-creation state of a watery chaos. Water is a blessing, but it is not something that can be controlled. We need it, but it can't be predicted.

That is why water is often viewed as a vehicle of the Spirit. The Spirit of God hovers over the water. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says that you must be born of water and the Spirit. And obviously, since ancient times, the Christian Church as believed that the waters of baptism are a sign of the Holy Spirit. And so we do today.

The Creed that we have been reading speaks about the Holy Spirit and says that we believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic church and in one baptism. We read the passages from Samuel and Ephesians about building God's house. In David's time, he wanted to build a temple, a house for God to live in. And the prophet Nathan passes on the word to him that God is one who moves about, who
does not live in a house made with hands. God is spirit. And in the letter to the Ephesians, the apostle that since they have been brought in by the Spirit of God to be part of the community of faith, no matter what their background has been, they are now part of the household of faith, growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. These two passages are about building a house for God. And that's what the creed claims. The household of God is not something made with hands, but it is built with water and the Spirit. And that's what we are doing today. We are building with water, and we are building along with the Spirit. We are celebrating this sacrament because God is building that one holy catholic and apostolic church. One because there is only one church, no matter what we call ourselves, Presbyterian or Orthodox or Baptist or Catholic, there is only one church, and we are all adopted into it through the power of the Spirit and the sign of our membership in God's family is baptism. Water. And it is holy because this is not something that is a human creation but is something that is commanded by Christ. Go therefore and make disciples, of all nations, baptizing. Most of you know that in our church we celebrate only two sacraments, while other churches celebrate more. We Protestants celebrate only baptism and communion because those are the only two that Jesus participated in himself and that he commands us to do also, and that are also open to all Christians. And so this sacrament is not just something that we do, it is something that God does. With Water. And the church is catholic. Notice when we write that it is catholic with a small c. We are not part of the Roman Catholic church, we are part of the holy catholic church. Catholic is another word for universal. We are part of the same church as all Christians around the world and across the ages. We are part of the same church as Christians in Africa and Asia and everywhere else. We are part of the same church as St. Peter and St. Paul and St. Teresa and St. Brigid and of our parents and of our children and those yet to come and everywhen else. Universal. Sort of like water. And we are apostolic. We are part of the same church as the apostles. As they were brought in by baptism, so are we. With water.

God does not live in a house made with hands. God is everywhere, but we believe he is with us as the
church built by water and the Spirit. It is created through the sacrament of baptism and by the movement of the Holy Spirit as he brings us together as the fellowship of the baptized, the community of the forgiven.

Today we are blessing this water that we will take to folks in Flint who have struggled with their water over the last few years. We have seen what a terrible thing it is to not trust the water that you need to drink, that you need to wash, that you need to live. As the church that is created by water and the Spirit, it touches us when there is a need for water. In a few minutes we will ask God's blessing on this water and on all the waters. In our baptismal prayers we talk about the waters of baptism: in it we are buried with Christ in his death. From it we are raised to share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are the community of the baptized, those brought together into the household of God by water and the Spirit. As the church, and as the church especially that has the blessing of living in Michigan, we know that water is vital. We pray that the Spirit's blessing goes with the waters of baptism we shared today and goes with the water that we send out today.