

The Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee (Deuteronomy 31:6).

By Charlotte G. Lindstrom
(Based on a true story)

From her seat on the front row, Cora* watched as her friend Beth took Elder Miller's hand. He helped her slowly down the few steps into the warm water of the baptismal font.

Beth's blond hair was carefully woven into a long braid down her back. She was not wearing her hearing aids. Cora was not wearing hers, either. She didn't like the way they buzzed and vibrated in her ears, sometimes letting out a loud screech that made her jump.

Now Beth was standing in the font. She looked at Cora and held up her hand, her pointer finger, little finger and thumb extended. It means "I love you" in sign language. Then Elder Miller placed Beth's left hand on his arm and grasped her right wrist in his hand. He smiled at her, nodding. It was just like when they had practiced. Beth smiled back. Then she turned and smiled brightly at Cora. Cora returned a nervous smile.

Beth's mom was kneeling in front of the font. Elder Miller bowed his head and closed his eyes, but Beth and Cora kept their eyes open. The only way they could "hear" the prayer was to watch as someone signed the words to them. Beth's mom signed for her, and Elder Smith, Elder Miller's companion, signed for Cora.

Cora could hardly keep her eyes on Elder Smith. She knew what he was saying—she had



BAPTISM SIGN

learned the prayer when they had practiced. It had been fun practicing on dry land. But now Cora studied the water doubtfully. It looked cold and deep.

Was Beth really going to do it? Was she really going under the water? Cora shivered. She could feel a nervous fluttering in her stomach.

She looked at the others in the room.

Most of them had their eyes closed. Some watched Elder Smith. Suddenly the prayer ended, and people opened their eyes. Cora quickly

turned her attention to the font. She watched Elder Miller put his right hand be-

hind Beth's back. Beth held her nose. Then he began to lower her into the water. It swirled around and enveloped her. He quickly pulled her back up. Beth's eyes were closed, and she was still holding her nose.

On her feet again, she pushed her hair back with both hands and wiped the water from her eyes. Blinking, she looked up at Cora, beaming with joy. Elder Miller escorted her to the steps, where her mom was now waiting to wrap a towel around her.

Beth was baptized! As Cora watched her friend's beaming face, tears came to her eyes. She, too, wanted to be baptized. She looked down at the white jumpsuit the missionaries had loaned her. She and Beth had dressed together, jumping up and down with excitement.

Elder Smith touched Cora's shoulder to get her attention. "Your turn," he signed. Cora looked

*Names have been changed.

again at the water, and a hard knot replaced the butterflies in her stomach. She shook her head. Tears filled her eyes and trickled down her cheeks.

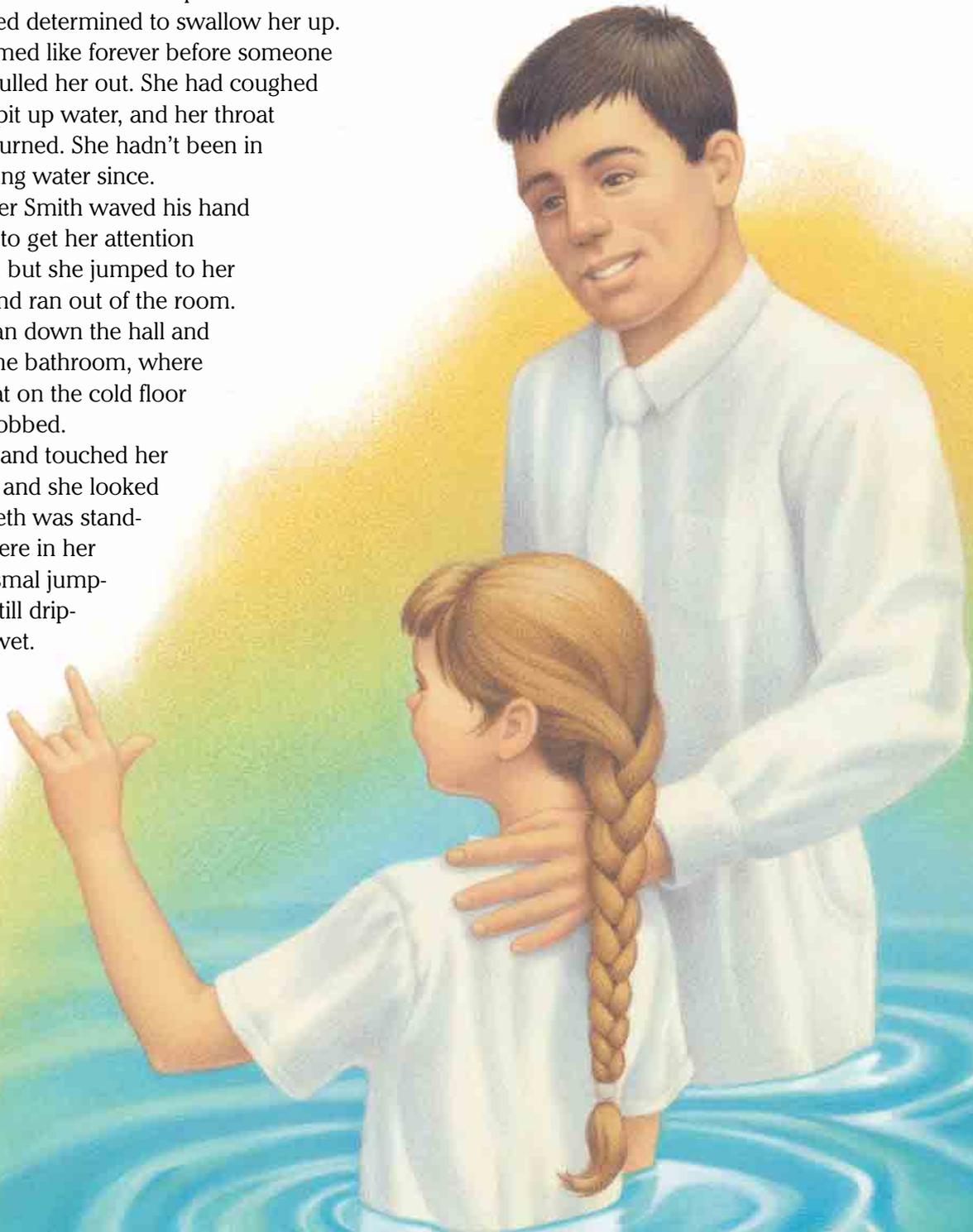
She couldn't do it! She had always been afraid of the water. Once, as a little girl, she had fallen headfirst into a shallow pool. The water had seemed determined to swallow her up. It seemed like forever before someone had pulled her out. She had coughed and spit up water, and her throat had burned. She hadn't been in standing water since.

Elder Smith waved his hand to try to get her attention again, but she jumped to her feet and ran out of the room. She ran down the hall and into the bathroom, where she sat on the cold floor and sobbed.

A hand touched her head, and she looked up. Beth was standing there in her baptismal jumpsuit, still dripping wet.

Beth slid down the wall and sat beside Cora. She put her arm around her friend's shoulder.

In a moment Cora stopped crying. Beth moved around so that she was facing Cora and began to sign. "You're afraid of the water, aren't you?"



Cora nodded with her hand. That means “yes” in sign language.

“I was afraid, too, a little bit. But it was wonderful! Elder Miller didn’t let go of me, and it happened fast. You can do it! Elder Smith will not let go of you.”

“I’m too afraid,” Cora signed back.

“Do you want to be baptized? Do you want to follow Jesus?”

Again Cora’s hand nodded.

“Jesus will not let go of you. He knows you’re afraid. He wants you to follow Him. He will not let go of you.”

Cora looked at her friend. She *did* want to follow Jesus. Would He help her? She knew the answer. Of course He would!

“OK.” Cora wiped her eyes and stood up.

They saw Beth’s mother standing by the door. Her eyes shone with tears. She took both girls back to the door that led to the baptismal font. Elder Smith came through another door and stood across the font from them. He looked at Cora and signed, “Are you ready?”

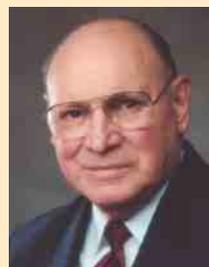
She nodded nervously and watched Elder Smith enter the water and walk slowly toward her. He held out his hand. She took it and stepped down into the font. The water was warm and gentle as it swirled with her steps. They stopped in the middle of the font, and Elder Smith positioned her hands on his arm. He nodded encouragingly to her and then bowed his head and raised his right arm.

Beth’s mom knelt at the font again and signed to Cora the words of the prayer.

When Cora saw the word, “amen,” a picture on the wall in the back of the room caught her eye. It was the picture of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist. She felt a warm feeling inside. He would not let go of her.

Elder Smith opened his eyes and smiled at her. He lifted her arm, and she held her nose firmly, closing her eyes. She held her breath just as they had practiced. She felt the water surround her as Elder Smith lowered her below the surface. In the next instant, she felt herself lifted, and the water released her. She blinked her eyes and gasped. She was baptized! She wiped the water from her face and pushed back her hair.

Opening her eyes, she saw smiles on the faces of her ward family. She turned back to the steps and saw Beth’s mother holding a towel for her. Beth was standing next to her mother, eager for Cora to join them. When Cora reached the top of the steps, she threw her arms around her friend, rejoicing that she had followed the example of the Savior and knowing that He was pleased with them both.



“Be of good cheer. The Man of Galilee, the Creator, the Son of the Living God will not forget nor forsake those whose hearts are drawn to Him. I testify that the Man who suffered for mankind, who committed His life to

healing the sick and comforting the disconsolate, is mindful of your sufferings, doubts, and heartaches. . . .

“Draw close to the Lord, Jesus Christ. Be of good cheer. Keep the faith. Doubt not. The storms will one day be stilled.”

**Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
(See *Ensign*, May 2000, pages 59–61.)**