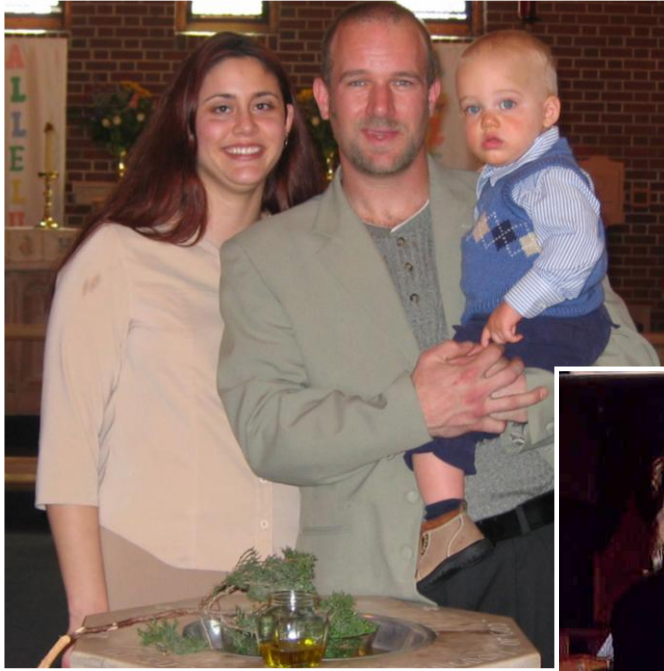


St. Mark's by-the-Lake



BAPTISMAL PACKAGE

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Notes

1. AS A PARENT OR GODPARENT YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- a. Are you prepared to the best of your ability to give the child a Christian upbringing within the community of Jesus Christ's Church?
- b. Will you assist the child in regularly attending public worship and in prayer, setting an example through your own teaching?
- c. Will you encourage the child to come to Confirmation and communion?

2. IT IS USUAL TO HAVE THREE GODPARENTS, TWO OF THE SAME SEX AS THE CHILD AND ONE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, BUT TO HAVE ONE GODFATHER AND ONE GODMOTHER IS SUFFICIENT.

- a. Parents may be godparents to their own children, provided that the child has at least one other godparent.
- b. Church law requires that godparents should be baptized and confirmed, but the requirement of confirmation can be relaxed in certain cases.

3. IT IS PREFERABLE THAT A CHILD SHOULD BE BAPTIZED AT HIS/HER PARISH CHURCH OR THE CHURCH HIS/HER PARENTS NORMALLY ATTEND.

4. PLEASE NOTE THAT AT THE BAPTISM THERE WILL BE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY AT THE END OF THE LITURGY FOR PHOTOS. WE ASK THAT YOU REFRAIN FROM USING FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY DURING THE BAPTISM ITSELF.

5. OUR PARISH HAS A BULLETIN BOARD PROGRAM ENTITLED "NEW BEGINNINGS." AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH WE KEEP A PHOTO OF ALL THOSE WE WELCOME INTO OUR COMMUNITY. THIS ADMINISTERED BY MRS. MARION HINTON. SHE WILL WANT TO TAKE A PHOTO OF THE NEWLY BAPTIZED WITH HIS/HER PARENTS OR SPONSORS.



The Baptism of Christ
by Lu Bro

What is Baptism?

Baptism is a public expression of becoming a Christian. It is a long-standing Christian custom, but there are genuine Christians who are not baptised, just as there are many baptised people who do not have true faith in Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to become a Christian?

Being a Christian means being right with God through having our sins forgiven. God offers this forgiveness because Jesus Christ died on the cross to take the punishment that each one of us should receive.

Being a Christian is not mainly about being good, or being loving and generous, or following standards of morality. However, people who have been forgiven by God will want to try and please him, and so they try to live accordingly.

Becoming a Christian means turning away from our old way of life (that is, from ignoring God and putting ourselves at the centre) and turning to God, trusting in Jesus Christ and asking for forgiveness.

What does Baptism symbolise?

Baptism represents a new start. It is closely linked to this idea of turning away from our old way of life and turning to God (which the Bible calls repentance).

Baptism symbolises the washing away of sin.

This is another way of speaking of God's forgiveness. For example, the apostle Paul wrote in the Bible that when he first became a Christian he was told: 'Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

Baptism symbolises the death and resurrection of Christ which Christian believers share in.

To demonstrate these links, people may be baptised by being pushed under water (to symbolise burial) and lifted up again (to symbolise resurrection and new life). Of course, we do not usually baptise babies in this manner!

Baptism symbolises formally becoming a member of the church.

Most Christian churches regard baptism as a condition of membership, but this aspect of baptism is not found explicitly in the Bible.

Baptism is really only meaningful where there is a genuine decision and desire to follow Jesus Christ. It is a commitment to following and serving him for the whole of our lives. The Baptism Service you will take part in expresses the expectation that the child being baptised will 'be true to Christ crucified until his/her life's end.'

What does the Baptism Service do?

It is a public rite of Christian initiation. That is to say during a baptism a person publicly becomes a member of the Christian Community. The community in turn, publicly commits to support and uphold the individual baptised in his/her life in Jesus Christ.

Baptism reminds us of God's wonderful promises to forgive our sins and to make us his children if we trust in Jesus Christ. These promises are publicly declared in the reading of scripture and in symbolic actions.

How can children be baptised if faith is necessary?

God's promises are not only made to individuals, they are made to families. So, for example, when the apostle Paul was asked by a man: 'What must I do to be saved?', he replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved you and your household.' (Acts 16:31)

Children are included with their parents in the promises of God. They may be baptised if they are part of a Christian family. Children are baptised on the understanding that they will one day make their own profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

If children are to grow up to be Christians they need encouragement and teaching. The most significant influence will be parents who have a genuine Christian faith of their own.

Who may be Baptised?

Any person who professes faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and has at least a basic understanding of the Christian faith may be baptised. In the case of children it is the parents and Godparents who express this faith on behalf of the child. This is always more meaningful where the parents have a genuine faith in Christ themselves.

What about Godparents?

It is traditional to have sponsors or Godparents. They should be baptised Christian people who have an interest in the spiritual welfare of the person being baptised. Traditionally there have been three Godparents per child. The number is flexible according to your situation..

When are Baptism Services held?

Our normal practice is to include baptisms in a regular Sunday service. This allows the congregation to be present to welcome the person who has been baptised. Most families prefer the 10.30 am service, where we set aside special Sundays in the year for baptisms.

Anticipated dates for Baptism services in 2005 are: March 26 (The Great Easter Vigil), April 3 (Easter 2), May 15 (The Feast of Pentecost), June 05 (The Feast of St. Boniface), September 18 (Holy Cross transferred), October 16 (Theresa of Avila), November 6 (All Saints), Please note that these dates are subject to change where necessary.

Cost - There is no charge for a baptism. The costs of running the church are met through weekly offertories. If you would like to contribute, there will be an opportunity to do so during the service.

What is expected of Parents?

Baptism for your child is based on the understanding that you, as parents, believe in and follow Jesus Christ yourselves, and that you belong to and meet with a local group of Christians. If you live in the area, we would love for you to make St. Mark's by-the-Lake Anglican Church your church home. We want you to know that our doors are always open for you.

As mentioned above, you will be expected to go through a preparation course, consisting of one or two sessions.

On the day of the service, the parents and godparents stand and answer some questions. An outline of the service follows, please read it carefully. If anything is unclear, we would be glad to discuss it with you.

What happens in the service?

You may be new to the baptismal liturgy or service and unaware of what will take place. In the service there will be a public reading of scripture, a homily or sermon will be preached, hymns will be sung and prayers will be offered. The Liturgy itself is patterned after a regular Sunday Morning Mass. Included in the midst of it however is the 'Baptism liturgy.'

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Concerning the Service

Christian baptism is administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The bond which God establishes in baptism is indissoluble. Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within a celebration of the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast. The bishop, when present, is the celebrant, and is expected to preach the word and preside at baptism and the Eucharist. At baptism, the bishop officiates at the Presentation and Examination of the Candidates; says the Thanksgiving over the Water; reads the prayer, "Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit"; and officiates at what follows. In the absence of a bishop, a priest is the celebrant and presides at the service. If chrism is to be used, it will have been consecrated by the bishop when he has blessed oils for the use of the whole diocese. Each candidate for baptism is to be sponsored by one or more baptized persons. Sponsors of adults and older children present their candidates, and thereby signify their endorsement of the candidates and their intention to support them by prayer and example in their Christian life. Sponsors (traditionally called godparents) of infants present their candidates, make promises in their own names, and also take vows on behalf of their candidates. It is fitting that parents be included among the sponsors of their own children. Parents and sponsors are to be instructed in the meaning of baptism, in their duties to help the new Christians grow in the knowledge and love of God, and in their responsibilities as members of his Church. Additional directions are on p. 163.

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Holy Baptism

The Gathering of the Community

All stand. The presiding celebrant greets the community.

Celebrant The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all.

People **And also with you.**

Or from Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost,

Celebrant Alleluia! Christ is risen.

People **The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Celebrant May his grace and peace be with you.

People **May he fill our hearts with joy.**

The celebrant then continues,

People There is one body and one Spirit,

People **There is one hope in God's call to us;**

Celebrant One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

People **One God and Father of all.**

The Collect of the Day

Celebrant Let us pray.

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The Proclamation of the Word

The Readings

The first reading as appointed.

Reader A reading from. ..

At the conclusion of the passage, the reader says,

The word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Silence may be kept. Then shall follow a psalm as appointed.

A second reading as appointed is read.

Reader A reading from. ..

At the conclusion of the passage, the reader says,

The word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Silence may be kept. A psalm, canticle, hymn, or anthem may follow.

All stand for the Gospel.

Reader The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Reader The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to ...

People **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

At the conclusion of the Gospel, the reader says,

The Gospel of Christ.

People **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Sermon

A silence for reflection may follow.

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Presentation and Examination of the Candidates

The celebrant says,

The candidate(s) for Holy Baptism will now be presented.

Adults and Older Children

Candidates able to answer for themselves are presented by their parents and sponsors as follows:

Sponsor I present *N* to receive the sacrament of baptism.

The celebrant asks each candidate when presented,

Do you desire to be baptized?

Candidate I do.

Infants and Younger Children

Then the candidates unable to answer for themselves are presented individually by their parents and sponsors as follows:

Parents and sponsors,

I present *N* to receive the sacrament of baptism.

When all have been presented the celebrant asks the parents and sponsors,

Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is nurtured in the faith and life of the Christian community?

Parents and sponsors,

I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

Parents and sponsors,

I will, with God's help.

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Then the celebrant asks the following questions of the candidates who can speak for themselves, and of the parents and sponsors who speak on behalf of the infants and younger children.

Question Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Saviour?

Answer I do.

Question Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Answer I do.

Question Do you promise to obey him as your Lord?

Answer I do.

*When there are others to be presented, the bishop says,
The other candidate(s) will now be presented.*

*Presenters I present these persons for Confirmation.
Or I present these persons to be received into this
Communion.*

*Or I present these persons who desire to reaffirm their
baptismal vows.*

The bishop asks the candidates,

Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?

Candidate I do.

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Celebrant Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

Candidate I do.

Celebrant Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Candidate I do, and with God's grace I will follow him as my Saviour and Lord.

After all have been presented, the celebrant addresses the congregation, saying,

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?
We will.

People

Prayers for the Candidates

The celebrant then says to the congregation,

Let us now pray for these persons who are to receive the sacrament of new birth.

A person appointed leads the following litany.

Leader Deliver them, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Open their hearts to your grace and truth.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Fill them with your holy and life-giving Spirit.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Send them into the world in witness to your love.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader *Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory.*

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

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The leader concludes,

Grant, O Lord,
that all who are baptized
into the death of Jesus Christ your Son
may live in the power of his resurrection
and look for him to come again in glory;
who lives and reigns now and for ever. Amen.

The Celebration of Baptism

Thanksgiving over the Water

The celebrant blesses the water, using one of the following forms.

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Celebrant We give you thanks, almighty God and Father, for by the gift of water you nourish and sustain all living things.

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

Celebrant We give you thanks that through the waters of the Red Sea, you led your people out of slavery to freedom in the promised land.

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

Celebrant We give you thanks for sending your Son Jesus. For us he was baptized by John in the river Jordan. For us he was anointed as Christ by your Holy Spirit. For us he suffered the baptism of his own death and

resurrection, setting us free from the bondage of sin and death, and opening to us the joy and freedom of everlasting life.

All
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Blessed be God for ever.

Celebrant

We give you thanks for your Holy Spirit who teaches us and leads us into all truth, filling us with his gifts so that we might proclaim the gospel to all nations and serve you as a royal priesthood.

All

Blessed be God for ever.

Celebrant

We give you thanks for you have called N to new life through the waters of baptism. Now sanctify this water, that your servants who are washed in it may be made one with Christ in his death and resurrection, to be cleansed and delivered from all sin. Anoint them with your Holy Spirit and bring them to new birth in the family of your Church, that they may become inheritors of your glorious kingdom.

We give you praise and honour and worship through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

All

Blessed are you, our strength and song, and our salvation.

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The celebrant then says these or similar words

Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

The Baptismal Covenant

Celebrant
People

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Celebrant
People

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

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**He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.**

Celebrant
People

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People **I will, with God's help.**

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The Baptism

Each candidate is presented by name to the celebrant, or to an assisting priest or deacon, who then immerses, or pours water upon, the candidates, saying,

N, I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The celebrant makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each one (using chrism if desired) saying to each,

I sign you with the cross,
and mark you as Christ's own for ever.

The celebrant, at a place in the full sight of the congregation, prays over the newly baptized, saying,

Heavenly Father,
we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit
you have bestowed upon these your servants
the forgiveness of sin,
and have raised them to the new life of grace.
Sustain them, a Lord, in your Holy Spirit.
Give them an inquiring and discerning heart,
the courage to will and to persevere,
a spirit to know and to love you,
and the gift of joy and wonder
in all your works. Amen.

The Giving of the Light

One of the ministers may then give to each of the newly baptized a lighted candle, saying,

Receive the light of Christ,
to show that you have passed from darkness to light.

When all of the newly baptized have received candles, the people say,

**Let your light so shine before others
that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven.**

*Celebrant
People*

Let us welcome the newly baptized.
**We receive you into the household of God.
Confess the faith of Christ crucified,
proclaim his resurrection,
and share with us in his eternal priesthood.**

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Symbols Used in Baptism

The Symbol of Water



Through the outward sign of water, God gives us the grace of new birth. The water of Baptism has many symbolic meanings. It symbolizes womb water and birth to new life. It symbolizes forgiveness and the washing away of all sin. Immersion symbolizes death to an old way of life and rising to a new life following in Christ's way. As the Hebrew people were saved and lead through the waters of the Red Sea, so is the new "Israel" and its people saved through Baptismal water. Water is poured just before the Baptism to show it as running or living water. Water is essential for life. It is also symbolizes cleansing.



White Garments

A change in clothing can be a symbol of important changes in our lives. Often candidates for Baptism wear special robes. The white robe symbolizes the putting on of the new life in Christ. It is the "white" of this baptismal clothing that is the origin of the name often given to the feast of Pentecost (Whitsunday ie. white-Sunday)



The Giving of the Light

The Paschal (Easter) candle is burning during a Baptism, to link Baptism with resurrection. The newly baptized (or the sponsors on their behalf) often receive a lighted candle which symbolizes that there has been a passing from "darkness into light" and that now the baptized will shine with the light of Christ in the world - "let your light shine before others that they will see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)



Oil

Oil, sometimes called "chrism", may be applied to the forehead of the newly baptized, with the sign of the cross. This marks the baptized as belonging to Christ. Scripture refers to oil being used for anointing. "Christ" means "anointed one". Our baptism links us to Christ. The oil anoints us to our Christian ministry.



The Font

The font or fountain holds the water for Baptism. Usually it is placed centrally for Baptism, though in some Christian churches it is near the door of the church to symbolize entry into the family of the church, and as a weekly reminder as one enters worship. The font should at all times occupy a prominent position in the place of worship, as a constant reminder of God's grace.



The Anglican Church welcomes you

Patricia Bays, 1996

Welcome to the Anglican Church! Perhaps you are a visitor or a new member and want to know something more about the customs and traditions of this church. Perhaps you have been an Anglican for a long time, but are curious about what the Anglican Church stands for and are looking for a refresher course.

If you are coming into the Anglican Church from another tradition, you may find some of our customs unfamiliar, perhaps confusing. I can sympathize to some extent with your experience.

Let me tell you something of my own story of discovering the Anglican Church. I was born the oldest child of a Scottish Presbyterian mother and an Irish Roman Catholic father, and was baptised and raised in the Roman Catholic Church. We were an observant family, attending Mass every Sunday, reciting the family Rosary, saying grace at meals, fasting on Fridays, attending church schools. Religious customs were part of everyday life.

Our Presbyterian grandmother lived with us. She demanded very strict standards of behaviour from us. From her we learned Bible stories and hymns. She also imparted, somehow, the idea of God as a strict parent -- a view that I have had to struggle to overcome in my adult life.

My sister and I attended a United Church girls' school, a school deeply influenced by the Christian tradition, with daily worship, fine liturgical music and excellent required classes in Christian knowledge. In its daily chapel services, I encountered the worship traditions of The United Church of Canada and its predecessors, the Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches.

Because we were going to a Protestant school, my mother was refused communion at the local Roman Catholic church. So when I was a teenager, my mother decided to attend the Anglican Church as a kind of middle road, and my sister and I accompanied her. I was immediately drawn to the Anglican Church by its worship -- the orderly pattern of common prayer, the richness of its music and symbolism. I have remained an Anglican, have studied and taught theology, and been involved with the life of the Anglican Church at many levels -- parish, diocesan, national and international. My life as a member of this church has brought me a great diversity and richness of experience. I love the Anglican Church and am committed to living and working within this family.

Here are some of the things that I celebrate about the life of the Anglican Church.

I love the **worship**, with its ordered patterns of prayer, the same from week to week and yet varied according to the seasons. I love the rhythm and music of the language of worship, and the colour and dramatic action of the services. Anglican worship, quite deliberately, I think, involves all our senses. Our churches are (usually) visually tasteful, colourful, attractive. Wood stone, fabric, appeal to touch as well as sight; flowers or incense connect with the sense of smell; the Eucharist, celebrated week by week, stimulates the sense of taste. Anglican worship is much more than a performance to be observed or listened to.

I appreciate also a certain "matter-of-factness" about Anglican worship. We join in **common** prayer. "Common" does not mean "ordinary" in this context. It means that we all say the same words together when we pray. Anglicans use set texts, printed in our books of Common Prayer. You will not find the priest extemporizing in prayer. Our worship does not depend on the personality of the priest or the quest for novelty or the stirring up of an emotional reaction. we worship God in accustomed patterns, the same week by week. This provides an order and stability to worship, though we do have variations according to the seasons of the year.

The **sacraments**, particularly the Eucharist, are an important part of being an Anglican. For us, the Eucharist is daily bread, food for our journey. It is to be celebrated frequently, on all occasions, in sorrow and in joy.

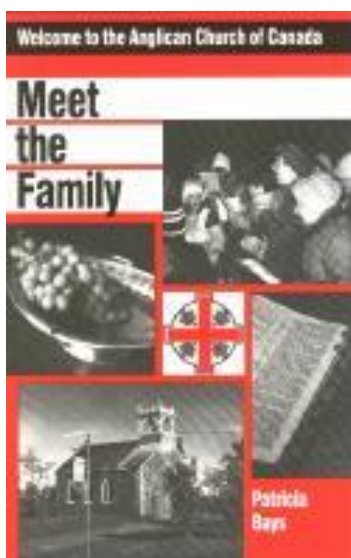
I find helpful the importance of **reason and common sense** in Anglican theology. God gave us minds and expects us to use them. The Anglican Church places a great deal of importance on theological exploration, and I appreciate this freedom to question and explore. Sometimes this exploration brings controversy. In the 1960s Bishop John Robinson's book *Honest to God* explored the Christian teaching about the nature of God in terms that secular society could understand. In the 1990s Bishop John Spong has written for contemporary men and women a number of provocative books exploring the Bible and the Christian approach to human sexuality. Both authors have generated a good deal of debate, in church circles and in the wider world. I value membership in a church which allows and, in fact, encourages such exploration, and is not threatened by the debate.

I also love the encouragement of **the life of the imagination**. Anglicans find God through art and music and fiction and poetry as well as through the Bible and theological texts. The great Anglican writers who shape and are shaped by our distinctive way of doing theology include such people as George Herbert, C.S. Lewis, William Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Madeleine L'Engle, Dorothy Sayers, and P.D. James. A current interest of mine is using literature in religious education, to encourage the use of the imagination in exploring Christian faith.

I like the Anglican emphasis on the **doctrines of Creation and the Incarnation**. We affirm that the world and human beings are good because they are God's creation. In Jesus Christ, God became human and shared in our everyday existence. God must value human nature very highly if God is willing, in Jesus Christ, to "take our nature upon him" as our prayers say. and if God also raises that same human nature to new life after Jesus endured suffering and death. We must work to bring all of humanity to its full potential as God intended, and I rejoice that we do this by loving God and by being involved in our society to work for change.

I like the **diversity** which Anglicanism offers. Within our communion we have a variety of styles of worship, of theological emphases. Yet we keep also a strong sense of family, of connections, of links in worship and structure. Through my involvement with international committees of the Anglican Church, I have had the privilege of worshipping in Anglican churches in many parts of the world. In a Nigerian village I was escorted into the church by a group of Women's Guild members, singing and clapping and dancing up the aisle. The service was in the Yoruba language but the pattern of the liturgy was the same as at home. In Malaysia, in a small frame church on a palm oil plantation, we sat on benches for the Eucharist. The music was supplied by a guitarist and two small boys who played a lively beat on the drums. Outside a young boy tended a flock of small goats and edged nearer to the open windows to hear what was going on.

Everywhere I have travelled there has been a warm welcome for a fellow Anglican, and I have felt at home as the familiar words and actions of the service unfold. It will be an enriching experience for you if you can visit these other "family members" when you go to different places.



I invite you to join with me in exploring what the Anglican Church is like and getting to know your fellow Anglicans or Anglican neighbours.

This is an excerpt from Patricia Bays' book **Meet the Family**, available from the [Anglican Book Centre](#).

In 1982 the World Council of churches produced a document entitled
Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

Faith and Order Paper No. 111

What follows is an excerpt from the section on Baptism. It outlines the Christian teaching on Baptism and the points of common understanding between Christian churches.

BAPTISM

I. THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

B1. Christian baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and in his resurrection. It is incorporation in to Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord; it is entry into the New Covenant between God and God's people. Baptism is a gift of God, and is administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. St Matthew records that the risen Lord, when sending his disciples into the world, commanded them to baptize (Matt. 28:18-20). The universal practice of baptism by the apostolic Church from its earliest days is attested in letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Fathers. The churches today continue this practice as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows his grace upon his people. **II. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM**

B2. Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people. The New Testament scriptures and the liturgy of the Church unfold the meaning of baptism in various images which express the riches of Christ and the gifts of his salvation. These images are sometimes linked with the symbolic uses of water in the Old Testament. Baptism is participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12); a washing away of sin (1 Cor. 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); an enlightenment by Christ (Eph. 5:14); a reclothing in Christ (Gal. 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (1 Peter 3:20-21); an exodus from bondage (1 Cor. 10:1-2) and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal. 3:27-28; 1 Cor. 12:13). The images are many but the reality is one.

A. Participation in Christ's Death and Resurrection

B3. Baptism means participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus went down into the river Jordan and was baptized in solidarity with sinners fulfil all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). This baptism led Jesus along the way of the Suffering Servant, made manifest in his sufferings, death and resurrection (Mark 10:38-40, 45). By baptism, Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ where their sins are buried, where the "old Adam" is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken. Thus those baptized are no longer slaves to sin, but free. Fully identified with the death of Christ, they are buried with him and are raised here and now to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, confident that they will also ultimately be one with him in a resurrection like his (Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:13, 3:1; Eph. 2:5-6).

B. Conversion, Pardoning and Cleansing

B4. The baptism which makes Christians partakers of the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection implies confession of sin and conversion of heart. The baptism administered by John was itself a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). The New Testament underlines the ethical implications of baptism by representing it as an ablution which washes the body with pure water, a cleansing of the heart of all sin, and an act of justification (Heb 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11). Thus those baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified by Christ, and are given as part of their baptismal experience a new ethical orientation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

C. The Gift of the Spirit

B5. The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people before, in and after their baptism. It is the same Spirit who revealed Jesus as the Son (Mark 1:10-11) and who empowered and united the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2). God bestows upon all baptized persons the anointing and the promise of the Holy Spirit, marks them with a seal and implants in their hearts the first instalment of their inheritance as sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit nurtures the life of faith in their hearts until the final deliverance when they will enter into its full possession, to the praise of the glory of God (II Cor. 1:21-22; Eph, 1:13-14).

D. Incorporation into the Body of Christ

B6. Administered in obedience to our Lord, baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship. Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity. We are one people and are called to confess and serve one Lord in each place and in all the world. The union with Christ which we share through baptism has important implications for Christian unity. "There is ... one baptism, one God and Father of us all... (Eph. 4:4-6). When baptismal unity is realized in one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, a genuine Christian witness can be made to the healing and reconciling love of God. Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship.

E. The Sign of the Kingdom

B7. Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. It gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. Through the gifts of faith, hope and love, baptism has a dynamic which embraces the whole of life, extends to all nations, and anticipates the day when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

III. BAPTISM AND FAITH

B8. Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift. It looks towards a growth into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). The necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches. Personal commitment is necessary for responsible membership in the body of Christ.

B9. Baptism is related not only to momentary experience, but to life-long growth into Christ. Those baptized are called upon to reflect the glory of the Lord as they are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, into his likeness, with ever increasing splendour (II Cor. 3:18). The life of the Christian is necessarily one of continuing struggle yet also of continuing experience of grace. In this new relationship, the baptized live for the sake of Christ, of his Church and of the world which he loves, while they wait in hope for the manifestation of God's new creation and for the time when God will be all in all (Rom. 8:18-24; 1 Cor. 15:22-28, 49-57).

B10. As they grow in the Christian life of faith, baptized believers demonstrate that humanity can be regenerated and liberated. They have a common responsibility, here and now, to bear witness together to the Gospel of Christ, the Liberator of all human beings. The context of this common witness is the Church and the world. Within a fellowship of witness and service, Christians discover the full significance of the one baptism as the gift of God to all God's people. Likewise, they acknowledge that baptism, as a baptism into Christ's death, has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life (Rom. 6:9ff., Gal. 3:27-28; I Peter 2:21-4:6).

IV. BAPTISMAL PRACTICE

A. Baptism of Believers and Infants

B11. While the possibility that infant baptism was also practised in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents.

In the course of history, the practice of baptism has developed in a variety of forms. Some churches baptize infants brought by parents or guardians who are ready, in and with the Church, to bring up the children in the Christian faith. Other churches practise exclusively the baptism of believers who are able to make a personal confession of faith. Some of these churches encourage infants or children to be presented and blessed in a service which usually involves thanksgiving for the gift of the child and also the commitment of the mother and father to Christian parenthood.

All churches baptize believers coming from other religions or from unbelief who accept the Christian faith and participate in catechetical instruction.

B12. Both the baptism of believers and the baptism of infants take place in the Church as the community of faith. When one who can answer for himself or herself is baptized, a personal confession of faith will be an integral part of the baptismal service. When an infant is baptized, the personal response will be offered at a later moment in life. In both cases, the baptized person will have to grow in the understanding of faith. For those baptized upon their own confession of faith, there is always the constant requirement of a continuing growth of personal response in faith. In the case of infants, personal confession is expected later, and Christian nurture is directed to the eliciting of this confession. All baptism is rooted in and declares Christ's faithfulness unto death. It has its setting within the life and faith of the Church and, through the witness of the whole Church, points to the faithfulness of God, the ground of all life in faith. At every baptism the whole congregation reaffirms its faith in God and pledges itself to provide an environment of witness and service. Baptism should, therefore, always be celebrated and developed in the setting of the Christian community.

B13. Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as "re-baptism" must be avoided.

COMMENTARY (B13)

Churches which have insisted on a particular form of baptism or which have had serious questions about the authenticity of other churches' sacraments and ministries have at times required persons coming from other church traditions to be baptized before being received into full communicant membership. As the churches come to fuller mutual understanding and acceptance of one another and enter into closer relationships in witness and service, they will want to refrain from any practice which might call into question the sacramental integrity of other churches or which might diminish the unrepeatability of the sacrament of baptism.

C. Towards Mutual Recognition of Baptism

B15. Churches are increasingly recognizing one another's baptism as the one baptism into Christ when Jesus Christ has been confessed as Lord by the candidate or, in the case of infant baptism, when confession has been made by the church (parents, guardians, godparents and congregation) and affirmed later by personal faith and commitment. Mutual recognition of baptism is acknowledged as an important sign and means of expressing the baptismal unity given in Christ. Wherever possible, mutual recognition should be expressed explicitly by the churches.

B16. In order to overcome their differences, believer baptists and those who practise infant baptism should reconsider certain aspects of their practices. The first may seek to express more visibly the fact that children are placed under the protection of God's grace. The latter must guard themselves against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ.

V. THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

B17. Baptism is administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

B18. In the celebration of baptism the symbolic dimension of water should be taken seriously and not minimized. The act of immersion can vividly express the reality that in baptism the Christian participates in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

COMMENTARY (B18)

As seen in some theological traditions, the use of water, with all its positive associations with life and blessing, signifies the continuity between the old and the new creation, thus revealing the significance of baptism not only for human beings but also for the whole cosmos. At the same time, the use of water represents a purification of creation, a dying to that which is negative and destructive in the world: those who are baptized into the body of Christ are made partakers Of a renewed existence.

B19. As was the case in the early centuries, the gift of the spirit in baptism may be signified in additional ways; for example, by the sign of the laying on of hands, and by anointing or chrismation. The very sign of the cross recalls the promised gift of the Holy Spirit who is the instalment and pledge of what is yet to come when God has fully redeemed those whom he has made his own (Eph. 1:13-14). The recovery of such vivid signs may be expected to enrich the liturgy.

B20. Within any comprehensive order of baptism at least the following elements should find a place: the proclamation of the scriptures referring to baptism; an invocation of the Holy Spirit; a renunciation of evil; a profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity; the use of water; a declaration that the persons baptized have acquired a new identity as sons and daughters of God, and as members of the Church, called to be witnesses of the Gospel. Some churches consider that Christian initiation is not complete without the sealing of the baptized with the gift of the Holy Spirit and participation in holy communion.

B21. It is appropriate to explain in the context of the baptismal service the meaning of baptism as it appears from scriptures (i.e. the participation in Christ's death and resurrection, conversion, pardoning and cleansing, gift of the Spirit, incorporation into the body of Christ and sign of the Kingdom).

B22. Baptism is normally administered by an ordained minister, though in certain circumstances others are allowed to baptize.

B23. Since baptism is intimately connected with the corporate life and worship of the Church, it should normally be administered during public worship, so that the members of the congregation may be reminded of their own baptism and may welcome into their fellowship those who are baptized and whom they are committed to nurture in the Christian faith. The sacrament is appropriate to great festival occasions such as Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany, as was the practice in the early Church.



St. Mark's by-the-Lake
Worships Every week

Wednesday at 10:30 AM

And

Sunday at 8 and 10:30 AM