

Baptismal Preparation Model #1: Large Number of Baptisms

A. For Whom

It is a programme suitable for 5 to 20 couples. Preferably both parents of young candidates would participate, but not necessarily.

B. Leadership

Lay or/and clergy. Parish-appointed sponsors (in addition to any which the candidate (parents) might choose) are necessary.

1. At least one person or couple per parish if a cluster event.
2. One sponsor for at most three candidates.

C. Format

Friday evening and all day Saturday, non-residential programme similar to marriage preparation models.

The purpose is to undertake the immediate preparation of candidates (or parents and sponsors) for baptism and to relate this sacramental act to the Christian life.

D. Programme

1. Prior registration with forms submitted through the parish priest.
2. **Friday evening:**
Stand-up socializing, over food/drink in order to build community.

Session 1:

Story Telling with specific attention to experiences of new beginnings/changes.

Goals:

- i) To acquaint participants with each other and the programme.
 - ii) Explore the life of Christ in terms of death, resurrection and new life.
3. **Saturday morning:**

Session 2:

The Face of the Lord (slide presentation and discussion).

Goal:

Explore the life of Christ with special reference to similarities/differences between his life and ours.



Session 3:

The Purpose of Baptism (Bible study of Acts 2: 22-41)

Goal:

Acquaint participants with Biblical norms of baptism and their application today.

4. **Saturday afternoon:**

Session 4:

The History of Baptism (video and discussion)

View "*Godparent Gussie*" and discuss using baptismal rite.

Goals:

- i) Acquaint participants with the history and development of baptismal rite.
- ii) Acquaint participants with the theology of the baptismal rite.

Session 5:

Christian Discipline/Expectations of Baptism

(Bible study of Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 3:13ff)

Covenanting process.

Goals:

- i) Explore the practical implications of baptism in terms of the church's expectations of candidates (parents) and candidates' expectations of the church.
- ii) Prepare a covenant between parish (represented by parish sponsor) and candidate (or parents).

5. **Liturgy:**

One of the rites during the catechumenate.

6. **Saturday evening:**

Session 6:

Ongoing Formation - view and discuss the filmstrip "*Beginnings of Faith*" (using one of four strips).

Goal:

To re-emphasize that initiation into the faith must be followed up with continuous instruction and ongoing nurture both at church and in the home.



7. In (home) Parish:

Liturgies on Sundays:

- i) “*An Order of Admitting Candidates for Baptism*” with follow-up prayers until date of baptism.
- ii) Rehearsal and “*Vigil on Eve of Baptism*”.
- iii) “*Prayers for New Christians*” after baptism.



Baptismal Preparation Model #2: Moderate Number of Baptisms

A. For Whom

Suitable for a parish having a moderate number of candidates for baptism, and able to limit parish baptisms to a few festivals per year.

B. Leadership

Lay or/and clergy.

Involves the use of a parish appointed sponsor for each candidate, who also comes to all sessions.

C. Format

Preferably in a private home.

Five two-hour sessions - four before the baptism, one after; a vigil on the eve of baptism for all candidates, parents, parish sponsors, and godparents.

D. Programme

Session 1: Introductory

1. Stand-up socializing, over food/drink in order to build community.
2. Outline of programme, roles of those present.
3. Sharing of life and 'church' histories in parent (candidate)/sponsor groups, with an emphasis on how (if at all) they are related.

Session 2: History and Practice of Baptism

1. Either: Bible study (Acts 2:22-24, 33:36-42), with an emphasis on the difference between this ancient and much more modern baptismal practice.

Or: Discussion in small groups of personal experiences of new beginnings/changes. Exploration of life of Christ/baptism in terms of death, resurrection, and new life.

2. View "*Godparent Gussie*" for history and technology of baptismal rite.

Session 3: Baptism as Entrance into Covenanted Life

1. Bible Study on Christian mandate for discipleship (Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 3:13ff)
2. Leader Presentation on Covenant: O.T. roots and N.T. developments, e.g., meal and sacrifice, obedience, means of entrance into covenant community.
3. Examination of the Baptismal Covenant.



4. Homework: Participants to think about specific ways they can fulfil and be helped to fulfil baptismal covenant.

Session 4: Covenanting

1. Notion of Covenant and Entry in Daily Life: In small groups discuss requirement for joining and maintaining membership in some organization of own experience. Report back. Make the connection between this and the idea of baptismal covenant.
2. Covenanting: Prepare covenant between candidate (represented by self or parent) and the church (represented by the parish sponsor).
3. **Vigil for Baptism** (ECUSA Occasional Office Book or other)
Late afternoon/evening before baptism.
Could show a film like "*Baptism*" at time of homily.

Session 5: Continuing Christian Nurture

1. Display of pertinent materials from Anglican Book Centre available for perusal and purchase.
2. Reflection on merits/inadequacies of Church school (onus for Christian nurture of children is on parents.)
3. Discussion of experiences important for Christian nurture: e.g., prayer, scripture, eucharist, family celebrations, "spontaneous traditioning".



Baptismal Preparation Model #3: Small Number of Baptisms

A. For Whom

For parishes with very few candidates per baptism.

B. Leadership

The family is visited in the home and prior to the beginning of catechesis the candidates, parents and sponsors are introduced to the congregation. It is suggested this be done formally within the liturgy at the main Sunday service.

There are 3 sessions - 2 before baptism, 1 after baptism

C. Programme

Session 1:

View and discuss video “*Godparent Gussie*”

Goal:

Acquaint participants with the history and development of the baptismal rite.

Session 2:

Explain and discuss the baptismal liturgy.

Goal:

Acquaint participants with the theology of the rite.

Session 3:

Six weeks after the baptism, view and discuss “*Beginnings of Faith*”, (use one of four strips).

Goal:

To re-emphasize that initiation into the faith must be followed by continuing instruction and ongoing nurture both at church and in the home.



Baptismal Preparation Model #3: Urban Parishes Capable of Attracting Adults Seeking Faith, Challenge and Growth

A. Assumptions

These persons need something more than an opportunity to become supporters of parochial clubs. They often desire serious, open-minded, critical assessment of the Christian tradition, and models of vigorous communal faith. This is the opportunity principally addressed by *“Making Disciples”* - John Hill, author; and Parts II and III may be directly applied.

B. Proposal

Two or more parishes might work together to create an “Anglican Academy”, that would have a life and programme of its own, but would also be closely tied in with the liturgy and nurturing programmes of the parishes. The academy could feature a semi-continuous series of 5-8 week programmes (one night per week), following an annual thematic pattern, but varying in actual content from year to year as needs and resources might determine. This would provide a number of entry-points or participants, and could serve not only catechumens (those seeking baptism or a reaffirmation of their baptism), but also the more casual enquirers, as well as some of the more committed among the faithful who seek substantial learning opportunities.

The locale for each of these shared programme-blocks might rotate among the parish premises; but at least one programme-block each year (perhaps the Lenten one) would be parish based, rather than a shared programme, in order to offer increased opportunity for integration of participants with their sponsoring congregations.

The academy would be open to all on a fee-paying basis; participants would be expected to commit themselves to completing any programme-block they began. Those seeking baptism or reaffirmation of their baptism would be expected to complete a full year's cycle, though they could begin at any of the 'entry-points'. It would also be normal for those coming to baptism to receive additional counsel and preparation from the sponsoring parish immediately prior to the baptism (as outlined *“Making Disciples”*, Part II).

C. Suggested Conditions for Association

A participating parish would be expected to undertake, at the time of joining, an orientation for its clergy and a small group of additional members who would serve as resource people for the academy and as potential sponsors for catechumens. The parish would be expected to provide a sponsor for every participant they sent to the academy; it would also be expected to provide appropriate programme-blocks at the agreed seasons, when this was to take the place of a shared programme. The rite of admission to the catechumenate would be enacted within the congregation, as necessary; and the rite of admission of candidates for baptism would take place in the parish annually, early in Lent.



D. Suggested Thematic Patterns (examples as suggestions only)

1. Advent (late autumn): Social and Ethical Issues, in Christian Perspective

- e.g. • Militarism, Violence, and the Search for Peace
- Business Ethics in a Capitalist Economy
 - The Impact of Changing Mores and Medicine on the Value of Human Life
 - Human Stewardship of an Endangered Planet
 - The Quest for Global Justice
 - Interpersonal Ethics in the Fast Lane

2. Epiphany (winter): Exploring the Church's Calling

- e.g. • The Message of Jesus and the Message of the Church
- Christendom is Dead: Long Live the Church
 - The Parable of Jesus and the Parable of the Church
 - Understanding Paul
 - Models of the Church
 - The Israel of God
 - Models of Salvation

3. Lent: Call to Conversion

- e.g. • Ashes to Easter
- Studying the Sunday Gospels
 - The Way of a Pilgrim
 - Learning to Pray
 - The Lives of the Saints
 - Israel's Story as Mirror of the World's Story

4. Paschal Season: Christian Imagination and Christian Tradition

- e.g. • The Earliest Communities of Jesus
- The Apostolic Gospel
 - The Interpretation of Jesus in the History of the Church
 - Novels, Graphic Art, etc. as Windows into the Mystery
 - Exploring the Eucharistic Way

5. Post-Pentecost (late spring and early autumn): Learning to Reflect on Scripture

- e.g. • Using the Bible for Spiritual Reflection
- What Kind of Book?
 - The Growth of Hebrew Bible
 - The Birth of the New Testament
 - Learning to Listen to the Lectionary
 - Biblical Eschatology

NOTE: This thematic area might continue through Advent, pre-empting the suggested Advent theme.



E. Resources

The thematic suggestions would need to be balanced against the local assessment of needs and interests, bearing in mind that adult learning must be largely self-motivated. The resource team would, therefore, be an important group at the level of discerning needs and interests.

In some urban areas, there will be a wealth of professional resource people locally available; in others, considerable reliance on well-chosen texts and study guides will be inevitable. The resource team could quickly learn, however, the necessary skills for leadership in learning provided they remember that the key is to enable learning, rather than to fill people's heads with knowledge.

Resources like LOGOS programmes, "The Church's Teaching Series", "Journey in Faith", and the study material for groups from Ave Maria Press and Paulist Press can be recommended. Films, novels, plays and field trips can also be used as learning resources. But it is worth stressing the importance of the human resources within the participating congregation, not the least because this helps to strengthen the on-going interdependency which is the heart of the church's organic lifestyle.

F. A Possible Pattern for the Week-Night Session

- 6:00 p.m. Simplified form of Evening Prayer (*BAS*) which from time to time would include the rites during the catechumenate.
- 6:45 p.m. Simple meal
- 7:30 p.m. Study session
- 9:00 p.m. Open Forum, over refreshments

