

APPENDIX A

Resources, Ideas, Suggestions to assist you

1. Immediately after the Service

Straight after the service is a time of great rejoicing and happiness not only for the parents, godparents, grandparents and friends of the baptised child's family, but also for the Church family – the child's newly acquired family. This joy is celebrated in some parishes with a special tea laid on by the parents of the children who have been baptised, to celebrate as we do other happy events such as birthdays and anniversaries.

While it is a joyous occasion, it should not be so extravagantly catered that it becomes a status "thing" – this is, after all, about the love of God and His undeserved generosity to us, and not about our importance.

2. After the Service – so what now?

As we have said, the actual Baptism is only the beginning of a much longer process: helping your child to go on growing in the love of God. Long tasks hit patches where we feel like giving up. The Christian life is no exception. But the other good news is that there are many resources available, written by people like us who know about our difficulties and with helpful ideas for overcoming them. These resources range from friends, through articles, helpful booklets, books on specific issues, or books of prayers and books on how to pray, to courses and parish support groups (e.g. a Young Parents' Group to look at parenting young children when you're new at it).

We can tell you about some of these resources; others you will have to find out about for yourself (e.g. we can't tell you what groups there are in your parish or area, but your priest, or churchwarden, or MU or AWF lady, or Parish Secretary, may be able to). If there is no support group in your parish to meet your particular need, find out if this is a general need and start a group with the guidance and help of your priest; or do this on an archdeaconry basis.

i. Books

Useful books are available from Grove Booklets, Herald Christian

Books (phone and ask for suggestions), Scripture Union, CUM Books – get the titles from friends who have passed this stage you're in and have had some success in it. Your priest, archdeacon, churchwardens, MU and AWF ladies, Christian friends, prayer partner, are all potential sources of such titles. There may even be Christian magazines that meet your needs – ask around.

You may find Bible Reading Notes useful, e.g. *Closer to God* from **Scripture Union** (look in the telephone directory), *Everyday with Jesus* from **CWR** (should be available from most Christian bookshops), *Faith for Daily Living* by the **Bible Reading Fellowship** (of which there are many – and again, you could ask Herald Christian Books for suggestions). They can be most helpful in wrestling with the question that all Christians face: how do I live a life that honours God in a world that finds God irrelevant? You should be able to find a series of Reading Notes that works for you and your situation.

Remember: that your child will get older and will reach a stage where s/he will love to work through a set of daily Bible reading notes for children (there are series to cover all ages). This is especially precious family time and has brought many a family to a new sense of closeness and gratitude to God for all His goodness. Parents can recall those special moments where significant connections have been made for ever.

ii. Tapes/Videos/DVDs

Good Christian videos may help you with particular issues or specific problems (note that there are also some not so helpful Christian videos around! So, be careful, and ask the opinion of sound Christian friends or members of your church). They may be available from the same places as the books above; the booksellers may be able to help you.

iii. Courses

Check out whether your parish has courses on Christian parenting in some form or another, or whether they can tell you about such courses. Listen out for announcements that may not use exactly these words, but may give you the guidance you need.

The lives of the parents are the most significant of all the “courses” your children will ever experience – so anything that enriches and benefits your marriage and lifestyle will be a “course” benefiting your children. These include any decent marriage courses and parenting courses.

At the teenage stage there are courses such as the “Happening” course for your teen to go on, which will help them to engage with the faith in a personal and exciting way.

iv. Support Groups

There is nothing to be ashamed of if you’re not the perfect parents. It’s rather unlikely that you will be – any more than other people have been! Groups consisting of people at more or less the same stage in terms of marriage, or parenting experience, can be very helpful for they show you that what you are working through is common, and that you’re doing no better and no worse than most other couples.

So, they act as encouragement to you both to go on with what you’re working at. They also offer you the friendship of people who understand better than most the issues that are facing you, and who will not judge you because they are well aware of what’s involved.

BUT the above advice is aimed at the normal ups and downs of life. IF there is a specific problem or issue, it is wise to get the appropriate professional help. You wouldn’t allow your neighbour, no matter how nice, to take out your kidney as a favour if they weren’t a doctor.

There is no reason why the growth that has come with this course, cannot come through some of the above, and enrich your experience as a Christian parent.

3. Gifts

Gifts to the godchild on the anniversary of the Baptism could include a good Christian book, a biography (autobiography) of a significant Christian, or the bits and pieces for a healthy hobby (i.e. not one that will present them with moral dilemmas) that will develop talents and abilities of the child, and bring them pleasure. The list could be

developed further, but this indicates the direction. Be aware that parents / godparents may ask to have such gifts blessed at the service.

4. Next?

You might consider at some stage becoming part of your Parish's Baptism Preparation Team and giving back to the church family some of your insights gained from living out your own Baptismal promises and helping your child to live out his or hers. You would be able to identify with young parents bringing their child to Baptism in a way born of your own spiritual growth. You would find it enriching and fulfilling – helping others always is. You will also be enriching “our children”, i.e. you will be a living part of the Christian family as expressed in **Session 3**.

5. Prayers

The prayer that the parents have written for their child can be used to celebrate their love for him or her in a number of creative ways. It could be set on a bookmark and laminated and used in the godparents' (or the parents') Bible; it could be turned into a laminated card (say A6 size) and be put in a place where it will be regularly seen; it could be turned into a certificate and be framed and hung on the child's bedroom wall. Use your imagination to find relevant forms for your parish and *these* parents.

6. Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child

If parents feel uncertain about committing themselves to the vows that are made at Baptism in the light of what they have worked through in the past few weeks, they can with full integrity request the service **Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child** for their child. Note that this service can be used at home and need not necessarily be led by a priest.

It is not too late at this stage to opt for this service instead of Baptism.

Where parents are not sure about where they stand in these matters of faith, it is best not to push them further than their faith allows. It is far better to celebrate honestly and with great joy that which can be openly done, than to go through a service of great import with onerous vows with a sense of dishonesty. The parents may well find, as they explore their faith, that there comes a time, not too far distant, when they want to opt for Baptism.

APPENDIX B

Birth and Growth in Christ

The Baptism of Jesus

At his baptism Jesus heard the voice from heaven which identified him as the 'beloved Son' of God, the Christ. He experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit and, led by the Spirit, he devoted his life to the salvation of the world. He saw his death as the atoning sacrifice for sin and the completion of his baptism (Luke 12:50).

Identification with Christ

'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:3-4).

The two main sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, together with Confirmation, all relate to identification with Jesus Christ in his Paschal Mystery: that is, his birth, death, resurrection and ascension, and the giving of the Holy Spirit, all understood in the light of the Passover. God saved Israel by the Passover Lamb and Jesus is the Lamb of God by whose death and resurrection his people are brought out of bondage to sin, into new life in him.

Baptism

'Baptism is to be understood not merely as the rite of a moment but as the principle of a lifetime' (Lambeth Conference, 1968). Just as ordinary life involves, birth and growth, so our birth and growth as Christians is an on-going development towards maturity. On the other hand, the administration of baptism is once for all, like birth and death. Christ died once and Christians are baptized once, either as infants or as adults.

The Apostles first proclaimed the gospel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36) and three thousand converts were baptized. Most of these must have been adults. Today there are also many, not baptized in infancy, who come to faith as adults and then seek baptism. It is likely that from the earliest times Christian parents brought their children to baptism,

and in time this became the general practice. For them, as for the Jews before them, infants were regarded as committed with their parents to God's Covenant. When Gentile converts, or proselytes, were received into Israel their children were received with them and shared in proselyte baptism. It is likely that St Paul followed this practice when he baptized households (1 Corinthians 1:16; Acts 16:15, 33). The practice of infant baptism witnesses to the truth that God must first give his grace to his people before they can respond to it.

Whilst the response of faith has to be made by each individual, human life is always lived in community. Children are born into a human family and those who are baptized are brought into the family of God, the Church. St Paul says, 'By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body' (1 Corinthians 12:13). Those who are baptized into the Body of Christ share in his anointing by the Spirit. United in him, they are to serve God in the world in a ministry of caring and compassion.

(An Anglican Prayer Book 1989, p. 361-2)

END NOTES & COMMENTS:

1. Wouldn't it be useful to have the e-mail addresses of the godparents? We could send them a short note before the anniversary of the child's baptism each year with suggestions of how they might celebrate *this* year anniversary for example.

2. **Reading:**

One Baptism Once, Grove Booklet on Ministry and Worship No. 61, Colin Buchanan, Grove Booklets Limited, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3DS, 3rd ed., 1989, ISBN 1 85174 126 7

A Case for Infant Baptism, Grove Booklet on Ministry and Worship No. 20, Colin Buchanan, Grove Booklets Limited, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3DS, 4th ed., 1990, ISBN 1 85174 131 3

The Renewal of Baptismal Vows, Grove Worship Series No. 124, Colin Buchanan, Grove Booklets Limited, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3DS, 1993, ISBN 1 85174 234 4

Preaching at Baptisms, Grove Booklet on Ministry and Worship No. 70, Gordon Ogilvie, Grove Booklets Limited, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3DS, 2nd ed., 1985, ISBN 0 85174 008 2

Infant Baptism in Common Worship, Grove Worship Series W 163, Colin Buchanan, Grove Booklets Limited, Ridley Hall, Cambridge, CB3 9HU, 2001, ISBN 1 85174 460 6

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982, ISBN 2-8254-0709-7