

# Baptised to Be

## Planning all-age worship focusing on the sacrament of Baptism

The service suggestions can be used in connection with  
the Baptism of an infant,  
the Baptism of a child or adult,  
a re-affirmation of Baptism  
any other service with a Baptism theme.

### BAPTISED TO BE . . .

Jesus said: I came to give life — life in all its fullness (John 10:10). Through Baptism, people receive that gift of life in all its fullness. When people are baptised as Christians, they are baptised to be . . .

- new people who will live forever with God
- free from sin and the fear of death
- God's children, part of God's family
- believers in Jesus Christ
- more and more like Jesus
- linked with the resurrection and death of Jesus
- continually dying to sin and rising to new life
- recipients of all God's promises
- bold, happy, faithful, loved and loving, forgiven and forgiving.

And that's just the start of the list. There is enough in Baptism to meditate on for a lifetime.

The Bible tells us that there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. So it seems appropriate that there be celebrating in our congregation when one person is baptised.

These *Baptised to Be* notes are provided as a starting point for developing intergenerational worship celebrating God's gift of Baptism.

### INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

All Christian worship is intergenerational. Several generations may be physically present. Each person brings to worship their

personal relationships with, and concerns about, people from the generation before and/or the generation following them.

*Intentional* intergenerational (or all-age) worship takes seriously the idea that people of all ages worship together. It deliberately invites and includes people of all ages.

Worshippers — young, old and in-between — can also be involved in planning worship, inviting people to worship, and leading worship.

Carefully planned intergenerational worship allows God and people to communicate not only through words, but also through the senses, movement, emotions, ritual and fun.

### BAPTISMAL RITES AND PRACTICES

Christians have a wide range of Baptismal practices. Some of them are seated in deeply held beliefs about the nature of Baptism; others are matters of tradition. The planning suggestions in this document are in no way intended to change your rites and practices, but to celebrate, complement, and make them more significant for worshippers of all ages and for any guest at a Baptism.

The notes are written from a particular understanding of Baptism. You will not use all the suggestions. Choose those that suit your situation and adapt them to your own beliefs and practices.

## THE PLANNING PACK

*Baptised to Be* materials have been prepared by the Resource Centre for Children's and Family Ministry of the Uniting Church (SA) to help congregations plan a worship celebration of Baptism that involves children and families.

You may make as many copies of the notes as needed for your worship planning team.

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## ADDITIONAL BAPTISM RESOURCES

<http://assembly.uca.org.au/TD/doctrine/beliefs.htm> — an explanation of the UCA understanding of Baptism.

**Having your Child Baptised** — a three session course for parents intending to have their infant or young child baptised. Prepared from a Lutheran perspective, but adaptable to other traditions. (On disk from RCCFM \$15.00, includes postage)

**Being Baptised** — a four session course for children ages 8–10 who have made a decision to be baptised. Parents attend the course with the child and are the primary teachers, supported by worksheets and a facilitator. Prepared from a Uniting Church perspective, but adaptable to other traditions. (On disk from RCCFM, \$15.00, includes postage)

**A Fishy Story** — a booklet about Baptism for children (age 6–10), designed to be read with a parent or sponsor, but can be read by child alone. (On disk from RCCFM, \$15.00, includes postage)

**Bee Cards** — a card ministry program for baptised children and adults. Includes model parent letters and card-making instructions for ages 0-12 plus a teen and an adult card and letter. (On disk from RCCFM, \$15.00, includes postage)

### UNITING CHURCH STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

[Section 7 of The Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia]

The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ incorporates people into his body by Baptism.

In this way Christ enables them to participate in his own Baptism, which was accomplished once on behalf of all in his death and burial, and which was made available to all when, risen and ascended, he poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Baptism into Christ's body initiates people into Christ's life and mission in the world, so that they are united in one fellowship of love, service, suffering and joy, in one family of the Father of all in heaven and earth, and in the power of the one Spirit.

The Uniting Church will baptize those who confess the Christian faith, and children who are presented for Baptism and for whose instruction and nourishment in the faith the church takes responsibility.

# Planning Intergenerational Worship

The Baptism theme is a great opportunity for working as an intergenerational team to plan a worship service. The experience of working and learning together may be as valuable as the actual plan itself. Allow ample time for planning.

**NOTE:** If you are planning this special service in connection with a Baptism, let the person being baptised (or the parents, if it is an infant) know what you are planning. Invite them to be part of the planning process.

## THE TEAM

Ideally the planning team for an all-age worship service will consist of at least three people. The members will reflect the age range of worshippers (either your regular Sunday worshippers or your target 'audience' if you are planning a special service). That means you will need at least one person representing the oldest third of the congregation, one representing the youngest third, and one representing the middle third.

Keep in mind that

- older people have the ability to understand (almost) anything planned to target young children
- young children may not be able to understand what is planned for mature adults
- worship is not just about what we can understand. It is also about what we experience and feel
- children may be able to help older people to have a deeper experience and feeling in their worship.

So — even though it may seem initially to make planning more difficult — make the effort to have at least one child (or youth or parent of a young child) as a member of the planning team.

You may also want to look for people on the team with gifts and abilities in specific areas, eg music, drama, visual arts, technology, organisation, hospitality.

## PRE PLANNING

Before the team meets, the worship team leader should be familiar with

- the reason for having a special all-age Baptism celebration
- your usual worship format
- your Baptism (or Affirmation of Baptism) liturgy
- the contents of this packet.

## PLANNING STEPS

Depending on how radical you will be in altering your usual worship format and how much you want to make the planning an educational and relationship-building exercise for the team, you may need one or several planning sessions.

Here are some helpful steps:

- 1. CHAT** Take a few minutes to make sure team members know one another and that each person has a chance to tell others about something important in their lives at the moment apart from planning the worship service.
- 2. GOAL** Team leader explains the purpose of the session and what you hope to achieve.
- 3. PRAY** for one another and for the planning process.
- 4. TALK ABOUT BAPTISM** Make sure everyone has a clear idea of what Baptism is and means. It may be a good idea to have a printed copy of your church's statement on Baptism for each person.

Read through the statement. For each section, consider the questions:

- What does this mean for me as an individual?
- What does this mean for our planning of a worship that focuses on Baptism?

Alternatively use the 'Dialogue on Baptism' resource (p 15).

## 4. LOOK AT YOUR REGULAR WORSHIP

**SERVICE ORDER** Have a printed outline of your service. Go through the outline to make sure everyone knows what usually happens at each point in the service.

Find words that everyone understands for any unfamiliar 'churchy' words.

Remember these words. If they are helpful for your planning team, they will be helpful to the congregation. You may want to use them in your service.

**5. BROWSE YOUR RESOURCES** Have a quick look at the various resources in this packet (and any other resources you have), so everyone is familiar with what help they provide.

**Note:** You will not use all of the resources, but choose those that best suit your situation. You will also need to adapt those you do choose to suit your situation.

**6. DECIDE ON YOUR APPROACH** There are two basic ways of building this service:

- Begin with your regular worship order (or service outline) and look for places where you can insert themes or activities relating to Baptism.
- Begin with your Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism liturgy and look for ways of expanding it to make it the basis of a complete worship service.

**7. SELECT A SYMBOL** See page 5 for ideas of symbols that could serve as controlling images for your service.

**8. BRAINSTORM IDEAS** for the service.

Have a sheet of butcher paper (or segment of a whiteboard) for each of the main elements of your regular service or your Baptism (or re-affirmation) liturgy. Have another paper or segment for 'general ideas'.

Let each person tell any ideas that they have about organising the service.

Record all the ideas, without analysing or judging them.

**9. EVALUATE THE IDEAS** Here's where each person can have a special input by reflecting on how they think an idea will help or hinder people in their age group in having a meaningful worship experience.

Look first at the 'general ideas' because what you decide here may influence the decisions you make about the other elements.

For example, if you decide to use the bubble symbol suggested in the following notes, you will look at how that bubble symbol can be incorporated into each individual segment of the service.

Also test ideas according to these criteria:

1. Does this idea reflect our church's understanding of Baptism?
2. Does this idea or activity relate well with other ideas you plan to use?

3. Can this idea be done
    - by the people in your congregation?
    - in your worship space?
    - with your equipment?
    - in the time you have for preparation?
    - within your financial budget?
    - and within your worship time frame?
- 

**When you have a pretty clear picture of how the service will look . . .**

**10. WRITE THE WORSHIP PLAN** This step need not be done by the whole team, but by the worship team leader or a recorder.

Write up your worship plan based on the group's discussion and decisions.

**11. GET SPECIFIC AND PRACTICAL** Prepare a 'to-do' (or 'who-does-what') list and make sure each person on the team understands what they need to do (themselves, or by contacting other people) to prepare for and/or lead the worship.

Note: part of the 'to-do' list may be to finalise selections, wording, etc that has not been completely decided by the team at this meeting.

Include in the to-do list a mechanism for each team member to report back to the team leader on the progress of their job/s.

**12. PRAY** Thank God for his wonderful gift of Baptism and the privilege you have of helping people celebrate this gift in worship. Ask God to bless your plans, help you in your preparation, and make the worship a blessing to all who attend.

# Baptism Symbols

In a worship service for all generations, it can be helpful to have a visual focus or symbol that will help people understand and remember the worship experience and the message.

The experience is likely to be more memorable if you interact a number of ways with a single symbol, rather than looking at a number of different symbols. The more aspects of the service you can link with the visual, the more unified and memorable the worship experience will be.

The Church has a number of traditional symbols for Baptism. Any one of these can be used as an image around which you can develop a worship service. The following are some starting ideas.

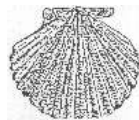
- **Water** is both an element of Baptism and a symbol of Baptism.



Scripture begins with water — chaotic waters that are put into order by the Spirit hovering over them. The life-death meaning of water continues through the flood waters of Noah's day and the saving waters of the Red Sea parted to allow the Israelites to pass from slavery to freedom. In the New Testament, John baptized in the Jordan River and Jesus began his ministry by being baptized there.

Depending on the weather and local conditions, you might consider holding the entire service beside a body of water — a lake, river, pond or stream.

- A **scallop shell** relates to the water used in Baptism. The image of the sea shell, especially the scallop shell, is frequently found on baptismal fonts. The shell may be used to pour water over the head of the person being baptised.



If you use a shell as a focus image you might decorate the worship area with shells (and or pictures of shells), ask each worshipper to bring a shell to worship, or have a shell to give each worshipper as a remembrance of the service.

If people bring shells, consider gluing them to the frame of a mirror, write the words 'I am baptised' on the mirror itself. Invite baptised people to look at themselves in the mirror and think about what it means to be baptised.

- **Three water drops** often attached to the shell symbolize the trinity: God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



You might use the story of Jesus' commission

to baptise 'in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit'. You may decide to look at the significance of names and the baptised person's new 'family name'. You may look at the nature of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as expressed in the baptismal creed.

- A **baptismal font or pool** is the container for the water used in Baptism.

If the font is the visual focus of your service, water and the 'washing' aspect of Baptism may be your theme. You might tell the story of Philip baptising an Ethiopian official when they came to water.

If your font is moveable consider placing it at the entrance to the church so that all who enter will pass by it, or put it in a central location and arrange seating in a circle around it. If your font has symbols on it, talk about the symbols. If the symbols are embossed or engraved, people could make rubbings of them.



- The **cross** is a sign that we are baptised into Jesus' death.



If the cross is your focus image draw attention to cross symbols already present in your sanctuary. You might challenge people (or family groups) to see how many crosses they can see.

Emphasise that in Baptism we are joined to Jesus' death and victory over death.



You may encourage people to make the sign of the cross themselves, or on other people.

- A **baptismal robe** is a symbol of putting on Christ — being clothed in righteousness. The robe is white for purity.

You could develop a service around the white robe image: encourage people to wear white, decorate the worship area with white flowers and white candles.

- A **baptismal candle** is a symbol that in Baptism we are joined with Christ — the light of the world — and that, as baptised people, we are to be light to the world.



You may use the light symbol and give a candle to each worshipper or to the person being baptised. It is symbolic to light personal candles from a 'Christ candle'.

- A **dove** is a symbol of the Holy Ghost and a reminder of both Jesus' Baptism and



the dove that brought hope to Noah. You might use either of these stories and decorate the worship area with doves.

Consider having people make origami doves before the service (see the Greenpeace site or <http://idpa.org.au/media/ORIGAMI%20PEACE%20DOVES.pdf>). You might suspend a rope (like a clothes line) from the door to the front of the church and have people attach their doves to the line when they enter the church.

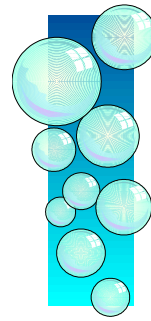
- **Bullfrogs and butterflies** are a more recent symbol for Baptism, inspired by the Barry McGuire song.



Like a baptised person, bullfrogs and butterflies have both been born again as new creatures. Bullfrogs start as tadpoles, butterflies as caterpillars. Their adult state does not resemble their adolescent state.

You might incorporate decorations and even science into a memorable celebration of Baptism as being born again.

## A FRESH BAPTISM SYMBOL



Baptism is a time of celebration by all generations.

People in 21st century Australia recognise bubbles as a symbol of celebration. Soap bubble blowing is fun and can be enjoyed by all generations. So in the *Baptised to Be* sample celebration service we experiment with

using bubbles as a controlling image for Baptism worship.

By using this symbol, we can incorporate visual and tactile elements into the service — allowing people to worship through seeing, touching and doing as well as hearing.

### Why bubbles?

You can tease out quite a number of explanations of the symbol, eg

- Bubbles and Baptism both begin with the letter 'b'.
- Both can be described with another 'b' word — beautiful.
- Bubbles and Baptism both involve water. It takes water to make a bubble. Water is the physical element (the thing we can touch and feel) in Baptism.

God didn't choose water randomly.

Water reminds us of both cleansing and death by drowning. It is also a vital element for sustaining life.

Martin Luther explained that water, by itself, is just simple H<sub>2</sub>O. The beauty and power of Baptism lies in water used with God's word and our belief in that word.

Water by itself does not make a soap bubble either; water must be mixed with soap and air.

- The soap used in making soap bubbles reminds us of the cleansing of Baptism.
- The air used in making soap bubbles reminds us of new life and of the Spirit.
- Bubbles reflect light, we are baptised to be reflectors of Jesus' light.
- There is perfection in the sphere shape of the bubble; in Baptism we share in Jesus' perfection.
- It's impossible to hold a soap bubble in a human hand; and it's impossible to truly comprehend Baptism with the human mind.

# Baptised to Be

## SAMPLE WORSHIP CELEBRATION

### INVITATION

A special Baptism celebration is a perfect opportunity to invite to worship

- people who have been baptised but do not regularly worship
- families and friends of people who are being baptised or affirming their faith.

Written invitations can be on round (bubble shaped) card or on round balloons.

Invitations from the congregation can be mailed, but hand-delivered is preferable. The person delivering the invitation might include an invitation to a meal after the service or offer transport to and from the service.

The congregation can provide people being baptised with invitations to give to family and friends.

### DECORATION

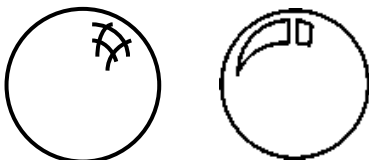
Have special decorations for a special service.

Highlight any existing Baptism banners or other decorations you already have in your church, eg move them to a more prominent position.

Get creative with the bubble motif:

- Fill the worship area with round opaque balloons that resemble bubbles.
- Hire a bubble machine and have it going.
- Have round bubble-shaped posters with any key 'B' words you will be using in the service, eg Being, Becoming, Believing, Behaving.

A few quick, simple lines can make a plain paper circle look like a bubble.



- Have round bubble-shaped posters with the names (and or pictures) of people being baptised.
- Create a *Baptised to Be* bubble banner for use in this service and future Baptisms.

### ENTRY

Catch people's attention as they enter the church by doing something special at the church door, eg

- Do a bubble activity (see page 18) outside the church or in a foyer as people arrive.
- Surround the door with balloon bubbles.
- Put a *Baptised to Be* banner above the door.
- Attach streamers of bubble-wrap plastic to the top of the door frame (like old fashioned fly catcher strips) so that people literally walk through a cascade of bubbles as they enter. Alternatively, have a roll of bubble-wrap plastic for people to walk on as they enter the church. Encourage people (children especially) to remove their shoes for this. They will also 'go through the water/bubbles' as they leave the church and move back into their everyday life as baptised people.
- Have your church's baptismal record (or copies of the pages) at the entry to the church so that those people who have been baptised there can find their details.
- Give people bubble-shaped name tags on which they can write their name and the date of their baptism. Consider giving everyone — baptised or not — a simple bubble-shaped name tag.
- If your service does not involve an actual Baptism, it may be possible to revive an old custom that highlights Baptism as an entry into Christian life.

Move the Baptismal font to a location just inside the door and encourage people to dip their fingers in the water as they enter the church. You could use any bowl of water for this symbolic activity. If you do this, be sure to refer to the activity in the service itself.

## 1. ARRIVAL

*Be sure to make people — young and old — welcome as they arrive.*

*This welcome is particularly important if there is a Baptism of someone from outside your regularly worshipping community. Plan how you will greet and serve*

- *the person/people being baptised (and, for children, the parents)*
- *sponsors/godparents*
- *guests.*

*You may take the baptismal party to a special gathering area for pre-worship instruction and/or prayers, or take them directly to their seats.*

*Give them any service orders or song books they will need and explain how to use them or how information is projected on a screen.*

*Even if the service is projected on a screen, it's a good idea to give the Baptismal group complete service outlines so they have an idea of what to expect, particularly when the Baptism itself will take place. This is also a memento they can take home from the service.*

*Explain the location of toilets, creche and any other services they may need.*

## 2. WELCOME & INVOCATION

**Worship Leader:** Welcome to this special service in which we celebrate God's gift of Baptism [and/or baptise (*names*) and/or affirm our Baptism].

Today we specially welcome (*names of people being baptised*) and their family and friends who are here for this significant occasion.

Here at (*name of church*) we worship 'in the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. We come together as people who belong to God because God invites us to meet with him; God is here with us; God serves us in worship. We love to spend this time with God to learn from him and to thank and praise him.

Later in the service when [*name*] is baptised [*he/she*] too, will be baptised in the name of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Let's begin with a song about Baptism. The band will sing and everyone is welcome to join in. The words are on the screen [*or number X in your hymn book*].

## 3. SONG

*The band leads the congregation in singing a song with a Baptism theme. Choose from the list on page 15 or from your usual worship song source.*

*Before singing this song and other songs in Baptised to Be, the band leader or worship leader may make a brief comment about the reason for the choice of song.*

*Or they may point out a key word or recurring phrase where children who are too young to read can sing, echo, or do an action.*

## 4. OPENING PRAYER

*Worship leader or another leader says/reads a prayer thanking God for the privilege of worshipping him, and particularly for the gift of Baptism.*

## 5. INTRODUCING THE THEME

*Note: In a small/informal situation you may introduce the theme by challenging worshippers to suggest why you are using bubbles in the service that celebrates Baptism.*

*Alternatively the worship leader explains:*

**WL:** You may have noticed some bubbles around the church this morning. The bubbles are a sign that this is a special time of celebration. They are there for other reasons, too.

Bubbles and Baptism both involve water.

In Australia, we know that water is a precious commodity. Human beings — along with all living things — need water for life. We believe that the water of Baptism is life-giving water. In a special way that we cannot really understand, it gives us life forever with God.

We also use water for cleaning. We believe that in a special way that we cannot really understand, the water of Baptism washes us clean from sin and fear.



The soap used in making soap bubbles also reminds us of the cleaning of Baptism.

So the bubbles can remind us that Baptism cleans and gives new life.

## 6A. BIBLE READING — Titus 3:5-7

**WL:** The reason we believe these things about Baptism is that we find them in God's word, the Bible.

Listen while [name] reads part of a letter from the Bible.

**READER** (*slowly and clearly*):

'[God] saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done.

God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning. God sent Jesus Christ our Savior to give us his Spirit.

Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life.'

*Alternatively project the Bible text one phrase at a time and read it together.*

## 6B. BIBLE READING — (Acts 8:26-39)

**Philip baptises an Ethiopian official**

*If a child is being baptised and your Baptism liturgy includes the story of Jesus blessing children, omit the Bible story here and emphasise the story in the liturgy.*

**WL:** There's a lot more in the Bible about Baptism. Here's a story that I love.

*Read or tell this story in a way that will bring it to life for worshippers of all ages, eg*

- *Read dramatically, expressively from an easily understood version of the Bible, eg The Message.*
- *During the reading show some pictures or have a group of people form tableaux of various sections*
- *People act out the story using the Bible text as script*
- *Invite children to come forward and listen as a story-teller tells the story or reads it from an illustrated Bible story book, showing the illustrations*
- *Provide a story-and-question sheet (see page 19) to all worshippers and invite people in family groups or other small clusters to read the story and discuss some key questions about it.*

## 7. CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

*If there is a confession and absolution within your Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism liturgy, omit it here.*

**WL:** The Ethiopian in the story went home, as happy as he could be — because he had been baptised and washed clean of his sins.

All of us who have been baptised have been washed clean. But we continue to think and say and do wrong things. Part of being baptised is recognising this, admitting it to one another and to God, asking God over and over again to forgive us and helping us to do better.

Let's do that now.

**Congregation** (*reads together from screen or worship booklet; alternatively a representative of the congregation reads*):

Dear God, we have thought, said, and done many wrong things. We have not loved you as we should. We have been unkind to others. We are very sorry for this. We ask you to have mercy on us for the sake of Jesus, your Son. Forgive us, and help us to be more like you.

**WL:** God, who washes people clean in Baptism, has heard your confession and has forgiven you because Jesus died for your sins.

## 8. SONG

*The band leads the congregation in singing a song about forgiveness or thanksgiving for forgiveness.*

## 9. STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*If the Apostle's Creed is used in your Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism liturgy, omit it here.*

**WL:** What we believe about God is what God has revealed to us. Please stand as we repeat an ancient and traditional statement of what we believe about God.

You may join in the responses on the screen [*or in your worship booklet*] if you wish to do so.

**WL:** Do you believe in God, who made you and loves you?

**Congregation** (*or a representative of the congregation*):

I/we believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

**WL:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, your Saviour and Lord?

**Congregation (or representative):** I/we believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**WL:** Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, and the continuing work of our salvation?

**Congregation (or representative):** I/we believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

## 10. SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM OR AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM

*The minister/pastor/priest conducts the actual sacrament of Baptism or rite of Affirmation of Baptism according to your church's liturgy.*

*Sample liturgies for Affirmation of Baptism can be found in [the Together in Worship project of UCA](#) and at [www.calvin.edu/worship/planning/sacrament/7\\_13\\_03.php](http://www.calvin.edu/worship/planning/sacrament/7_13_03.php)*

You may

- *invite children to sit or stand near the font so that they can see what is happening*
- *give each child a small container of bubble-blowing liquid (available from most bargain shops for weddings and other occasions). Let them have a practice blow before the liturgy and then to hold them quietly in their laps and wait until they hear you say: I baptise you in the name of the Father (blow bubbles), Son (blow bubbles) and Holy Spirit (blow bubbles). Alternatively, they could wait and blow lots of bubbles when you present the baptised person to the congregation at the end of the Baptism liturgy*
- *explain what you are doing*  
*Consider having a media-like 'voice over' commentator who gives the*

*description/explanation while the minister performs the standard ritual*

- *make a video (or series of photos) of the ceremony to give to the person being baptised as a way of remembering the event.*

## 11. SONG

*The band leads the congregation in singing a Baptism song. If possible, select a song with children especially in mind — a song with simple words and tune and possibly one that can incorporate actions. See the list on page 14 or your usual worship song source.*

## 12. SERMON: Baptised to Be

*The Baptism Dialogue (page 15) could be used as a sermon or the basis of a sermon.*

*Emphasise that Baptism is not just a one-off event to be forgotten, but the beginning of a new life as a new kind of person — the person you are baptised to be.*

*The text could be Galatians 5:22 (the fruit of the Spirit) which details the kind of person we are baptised to be under the control of God's Spirit.*



*Project the key words on screen in bubble shapes.*

*Alternatively use as text one of the Baptism passages listed on page 12.*

*If the sermon is for 'adults only' and children are present, you may give children a special assignment which they can do at their seats with their families or in a special children's area.*

*Possible assignments:*

- *Listen to the sermon and blow soap bubbles whenever the preacher uses the word 'baptise/Baptism'.*
- *Draw a picture of what happened in the Baptism.*

*See bubble activities on page 18 for ideas you may use if children leave the worship area during the sermon.*

## 13. OFFERING

*Explain that your offering is 'a thank-you to God for what he has done for the person baptised' and/or 'a gift to help the church serve more people'.*

Explain the procedure for giving/collecting the offering.

If there are guests, be sure to explain that giving an offering is a privilege of members and guests are not expected/required to participate.

## 14. SONG

The band leads the congregation in singing a Baptism song or an offering song.

## 15. CLOSING PRAYER

The worship leader (or a prayer leader, or several prayer leaders) prays

- for the people just baptised,
- for the members of the congregation,
- and for the community and the world.

If the Lord's Prayer is not used elsewhere in the service, the prayers may conclude with the Lord's Prayer as a summary of all our concerns.

## 16. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Give brief announcements needed for congregational life in the next week, being aware of visitors who may not be concerned with housekeeping matters.
- Explain procedures for leaving the worship area.
- Invite visitors/guests to join in after-service fellowship.
- Give people a memento of the service. Explain what you are giving them, why you are giving it, and how you intend them to use it, eg
  1. Give each family a sheet with ideas they can use at home for remembering that they are Baptised to Be (see sample on page 20)
  2. Give each person a small bar of soap. Have children with baskets of soap circulate through the congregation distributing a soap bar to each person while the

worship leader or a capable older child explains:

**WL:** We want to give you something to help you remember this service and — if you have been baptised — your own Baptism.

Some of the children will be bringing you a piece of soap. Take it home and put it in your bathroom. Use it this week when you wash your hands. As you do so, you may like to blow some bubbles.

The speaker may demonstrate hand-washing and making bubbles of soap film held between the hands.

But we really hope that each time you use the soap you will remember that in Baptism God washes you and makes you a new, clean, forgiven person.

## 17. BLESSING

**WL:** Go in peace. Be what God has made you to be. Amen.

## 18. SONG

The band leads the congregation in singing a joyful, close-of-worship song from page 14 or from your usual worship song source.

If children have bottles of bubble mixture they could blow bubbles during a chorus of the song, or lead a procession out of the worship area.

## 19. AFTER THE SERVICE

The worship leader and the baptised persons may stand at the door as a 'reception line' so all worshippers can greet them as they leave.

Provide a fellowship morning tea or meal for the Baptismal party and the congregation after the service.

Have bubble activities for children in a safe area away from adults with hot drinks. See page 18. Better still; invite everyone to participate in some activities together.

# Some Bible Passages Relating To Baptism

## BAPTISM STORIES

John baptises Jesus

**Matthew 3; Mark 1, Luke 3**

Jesus blesses little children

**Mark 10:13-16**

(also Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17)

Philip baptises an Ethiopian official

**Acts 8:26-39**

Saul (Paul) is baptised

**Acts 9:18**

(also Acts 22:11-16)

Lydia and her family are baptised

**Acts 16:13-15**

Philippian jailer and his family are baptised

**Acts 16:33**

## BAPTISM BY JOHN

I [John] baptize you with water so that you will give up your sins. But someone more powerful is going to come, and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. He will **baptize** you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

**Matthew 3:11**

(also John 1:33)

Later, Jesus and his disciples went to Judea, where he [John the Baptist] stayed with them for a while and was baptizing people. John had not yet been put in jail. He was at Aenon near Salim, where there was a lot of water, and people were coming there for John to baptize them.

**John 3:22-24**

## WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT BAPTISM

Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**Matthew 28:19**

Anyone who believes me and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe me will be condemned.

**Mark 16:16**

I tell you for certain that before you can get into God's kingdom, you must be born not only by water, but by the Spirit. Humans give life to their children. Yet only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God.

**John 3:5,6**

## WHAT BAPTISM IS AND DOES

### Forgiveness of sins

So I confessed my sins and told them all to you. I said, 'I'll tell the LORD each one of my sins'. Then you forgave me and took away my guilt.

**Psalms 32:5**

I will sprinkle you with clean water, and you will be clean and acceptable to me. I will wash away everything that makes you unclean, and I will remove your disgusting idols.

**Ezekiel 36:25**

In the future there will be a fountain, where David's descendants and the people of Jerusalem can wash away their sin and guilt.

**Zechariah 13:1**

Peter said, 'Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live'. . . . On that day about three thousand believed his message and were baptized. They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.

**Acts 2:38,39,41,42**

Now the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God's Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God.

**1 Corinthians 6:11**

### Baptism is for all

'These Gentiles have been given the Holy Spirit, just as we have! I am certain that no one would dare stop us from baptizing them.' Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and they asked him to stay on for a few days.

**Acts 10:47,48**

### New life

When we were baptized, we died and were buried with Christ. We were baptized, so that we would live a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.

**Romans 6:4**

I have died, but Christ lives in me. And I now live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.

**Galatians 2:20**

Each of you is now a new person. You are becoming more and more like your Creator, and you will understand him better. **Colossians 3:10**

#### **God's children**

All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes. **Galatians 3:26,27**

#### **Church unity**

We have only one Lord, one faith, and one Baptism. **Ephesians 4:5**

He made the church holy by the power of his word, and he made it pure by washing it with water. Christ did this, so that he would have a glorious and holy church, without faults or spots or wrinkles or any other flaws. **Ephesians 5:26,27**

#### **Free from Satan**

God rescued us from the dark power of Satan and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son, who forgives our sins and sets us free. **Colossians 1:13,14**

Children, you belong to God, and you have defeated these enemies. God's Spirit is in you and is more powerful than the one that is in the world. **1 John 4:4**

#### **Washed clean**

He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning. God sent Jesus Christ our Savior to give us his Spirit. Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life. **Titus 3:5-7**

Those flood waters were like Baptism that now saves you. But Baptism is more than just washing your body. It means turning to God with a clear conscience, because Jesus Christ was raised from death. **1 Peter 3:21**

#### **JESUS DID NOT BAPTISE**

Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard that he was winning and baptizing more followers than John was. But Jesus' disciples were really the ones doing the baptizing, and not Jesus himself. **John 4:1,2**

(All Bible quotations from the *Contemporary English Version*)

# Baptism Songs

In planning music for your service include at least one or two songs with a Baptism theme. A number of possibilities are listed below.

You may introduce a new Baptism song by having it 'performed' by a band, choir or other musicians. Alternatively you can use the lyrics of the song as a basis for teaching about Baptism. Be sure to balance any songs that are new to the group with songs that are familiar.

Keep in mind that visitors to the service may not be familiar with — or comfortable with — congregational singing. Give permission for people to simply listen if they wish to do so.

Most **traditional** hymnals have sections of Baptismal hymns, eg

- Breathe on me breath of God (Hatch)
- He that believes and is baptised shall see the Lord's salvation (Kingo)
- I am baptised, O blessed day (Mueller)
- I was made a Christian (Jones)
- Just as I am, without one plea (Elliott)
- Lord, in the strength of grace (Wesley)
- Lord Jesus, once a child (Green) — for Baptism of a child
- Lord, you have founded through your Son (Zwick)
- My God, accept my heart this day (Bridges)
- Now in the name of him (Kaan)  
Complex language in this hymn makes the first verse hard to understand. But the other (simpler) verses mention a number of teachings about Baptism and link it to the Old Testament stories of Noah, Moses and Jonah
- Peace with the Father, peace with Christ his Son (Quinn)
- Thine be the glory (Budry) *Yours is the glory*
- O happy day that fixed my choice on you (Doddridge)
- We praise you, Lord, for Jesus Christ (O'Neill) The hymn looks at some symbols of Baptism
- When to the sacred font we came (Scottish Paraphrases, sung to Tallis Ordinal, based on Romans 6:3,4)

**Contemporary songs** that relate to Baptism include:

- All things are possible (Zschech)  
*Almighty God, my Redeemer*
- Born again (Bullock) *I'm pressing forward*
- Born forever (Jaensch)
- Father welcomes all his children (Mann)
- He set me free (Valine)
- I know it (Zschech)
- I'll sing your song (Marshall)
- Stay (Munns) *I'm not the same*
- I've got something that the world can't give (anonymous)
- Let the weak say 'I am strong' (Morgan)
- M-M-M-Miracle (Holmes)
- My Redeemer lives (Morgan) *I know he rescued my soul*
- New people new life (Beha)
- Oh, the mercy of God (Bullock)
- One big family (Simpson)
- The stone's been rolled away (Bullock) *I've been forgiven*
- You rescued me (Bullock)

# A DIALOGUE ABOUT BAPTISM

## based on LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

This script can be used in a variety of ways.

It can be used to help the Planning Team think about Baptism. It can be used in an educational setting (eg Sunday school) to help people prepare for the worship service.

The dialogue (or parts of it) can be used within the worship service itself, eg

- A 'Baptism Bubble' puppet can do the 'B' parts in dialogue with a real person 'A' asking the questions. Consider using a round, opaque balloon on a stick with a face drawn on it as the Baptism Bubble.
- The dialogue can be between two people puppets. Using puppets allows presenters to read (rather than memorise) the script. However it must still be well rehearsed.
- A parent/child combo could do the dialogue. Child can be the Questioner and the Parent the Answerer (or vice versa).
- A minister or teacher could have an informal dialogue with a young person (or several young people) using this script as a starting point, but dealing with the kids' own questions.

The dialogue could be used to introduce the concept of Baptism or it might be adapted for use as a sermon.

**B** (*popping or singing a bubbling sound, dancing or swaying to the rhythm*): Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.  
Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.

**A:** You sound just like a bubble. What in the world are you doing? And why are you doing it in church?

**B:** Just kind of thinking about Baptism — and bubbles. Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.

**A:** Yeah. Ok. If you're doing all that thinking, can you tell me what it is?

**B:** Thinking?

**A:** No. Baptism. I keep hearing that word. But what, exactly is it?

**B:** Baptism is water . . .

**A:** But it's not just water, is it?

**B:** No. Baptism is water used with God's words in the special way he told us to use it.

**A:** What did he say?

**B** (*may read this from a Bible and/or have the words projected on screen*):

Jesus says:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19 NIV)

**A:** Awesome. The name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Those are God's words that are used with water to make Baptism!

**B:** Right.

**A:** But why do you do it? Oh, I know you do it because Jesus told you to. But why did Jesus want you to do it? What does it give us?

**B:** That's the really important question — what's in it for us?

**A:** Well, yeah . . .

**B:** OK. Listen carefully: In Baptism God gives us  
one — forgiveness of sins,  
two — freedom from the devil  
and three — life with God forever.

**A:** Forgiveness, freedom, life — that's some heavy stuff!

**B:** Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.  
Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.

**A:** What are you doing now?

**B:** Just giving you some time to think about it.

**A:** Thanks. Bub, bub . . . bub, but I can't see how water can do all that.

**B:** Remember, it's not just the water. Water is just water, but in Baptism it's water *plus* the all-powerful word of God.

**A:** Yeah. You already said that.

**B:** Need some more thinking time?  
Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.

**A:** That's all there is to it. Water and God's word?

**B:** There is one other thing.

**A:** Aha! I thought so. What else?

**B:** You've got to believe it.

**A:** Believe what?

**B:** Believe that God is God.

**A:** (*Confidently*) Alright.

**B:** Believe that what God says is true.

**A:** (*A bit less confident*) OK.

**B:** Believe it when God say that in Baptism he forgives you and gives you victory over the devil and gives you life with him forever.

**A:** (*Questioning*) Yeah?

**B:** Believe that when we use God's word with the water, the Holy Spirit shows God's love for us by washing us clean from sin and by giving us new life.

**A:** That's a lot to believe. How do you know?

**B:** Baptism is more about believing than knowing.

**A:** Bub, bub, . . .bub, but, but where's the proof?

**B:** Go back to God's word. (*May read or have the words displayed.*)  
God saved us because of his mercy . . .  
God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit.  
He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning.  
Jesus treated us much better than we deserve.  
He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life.

This message is certainly true.  
(Titus 3:5-8 CEV)

**A:** That's awesome.

**A & B:** Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.  
Bub, bub — bub, bub bub.

**A:** It's awesome, alright. But what difference does it make? — when we get out of here, I mean.

**B:** Good question. If it doesn't make a difference it's not worth all the fuss, is it?

**A:** Nuh.

**B:** But it does make a difference. When you're baptised, you are baptised forever. You can always claim that you are God's loved child. He has forgiven you for always. You will live with him forever — no matter what.

**A:** Come on. I'll still have problems. I'll still do wrong things. I reckon I'll still die — no matter what you say.

**B:** That's right.

**A:** So . . .

**B:** So you really need to remind yourself every day that you are baptised. And every time you have to make a tough decision. And every time you have a problem.

**A:** I am baptised.

**B:** Forever.

**A:** I am forgiven.

**B:** Yes.

**A:** God loves me and washed me clean — his kind of clean.

**B:** Yes!

**A:** I'm gonna live forever.

**B:** Abso-bub-bub-bubble-lutely!

**A:** Abso-bub-bub-bubble-lutely!



# Some Quotations Relating to Baptism

**Wikipedia.com** has a useful section on Baptism, particularly a comparison of various denominational understandings and practices. It includes the following:

" ... according to Acts 2:38, Baptisms follow from Peter's preaching Baptism in the name of Jesus and lead those baptized to the receiving of Christ's Spirit, the Holy Ghost, and life in the community: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayer (2:42) as well as to the distribution of goods to those in need (2:45).

Those who heard, who were baptized and entered the community's life, were already made witnesses of and partakers in the promises of God for the last days: the forgiveness of sins through Baptism in the name of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on all flesh (2:38).

Similarly, in what may well be a baptismal pattern, 1 Peter testifies that proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and teaching about new life (1:3-21) lead to purification and new birth (1:22-23). This, in turn, is followed by eating and drinking God's food (2:2-3), by participation in the life of the community — the royal priesthood, the new temple, the people of God (2:4-10) — and by further moral formation (2:11 ff.).

At the beginning of 1 Peter the writer sets this Baptism in the context of obedience to Christ and sanctification by the Spirit (1:2). So Baptism into Christ is seen as Baptism into the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13).

In the fourth gospel Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus indicates that birth by water and Spirit becomes the gracious means of entry into the place where God rules (John 3:5)."  
**Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry**

(prepared by representatives across a spectrum of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions of Christianity)

We should celebrate the day of our Baptism as we do our birthday! . . . All Christians should reflect on the meaning and importance of their own Baptism.

**Pope John Paul II**

A part of the act of Baptism in the Church of India is for the candidate to place his own hand on his head and say, 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' This is part of the baptismal service of new members, not the ordination of ministers.

**E. Paul Hobey**

Don't bother at all about that question of a person being 'made' a Christian' by Baptism. It's only the usual trouble about words being used in more than one sense. We might say a man 'became a soldier' the moment that he joined the army but his instructors might say six months later 'I think we have made a soldier of him'. Both usages are quite definable, only one wants to know which is being used in a given sentence.

**C.S.Lewis**

To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by human beings but by God. Although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act.

**Martin Luther**

I have been baptized! (Martin Luther's response to the Devil)

**Martin Luther**

God went out and womped us with the water and the Word. He branded us and now we are part of the herd. **Monty Lysne**

We are all infant prodigies. **Thomas Mann**

Baptism saves you like a life preserver saves you. It's there. Cling to it.

**Rich Melheim**

Gen-Xers use piercings and tattoos as their own sacramentals, partly because religious institutions today are unable to provide for deeply marking, profoundly experiential encounters.

**Thomas Moore Beaudoin**

Vaccination is the medical sacrament corresponding to Baptism. **Samuel Butler**

# Some Soap Bubble Activities

Any of these activities could be done

- by all worshippers before the service
- by children if they go to separate children's activity during a sermon
- by children (or anyone who wants to join in) after the service.

Any of the bubble crafts can be mementoes of the service.

The internet provides lots of bubble ideas. Google 'soap bubble crafts' and/or 'soap bubble activities'. Then go to sites like

- **'creativekids at home'** for recipes for bubble solutions and ideas for bubble blowing wands.
- **'familyfun'** for a short video showing how to make soap bubble prints. Once made, prints can be used to make
  - cards for the person being baptised on the day
  - a background on which to mount a picture of the person being baptised
  - the background for a poster with a collage of pictures of people who have been baptised
  - the background for a poster of a favourite Baptism text from the Bible.
- **'kids-party-paradise'** for another version of the soap bubble prints plus
  - bubble wrap prints and
  - bubble blowing designs

- **Zurqui (Bubbletown)** for lots of bubble information.

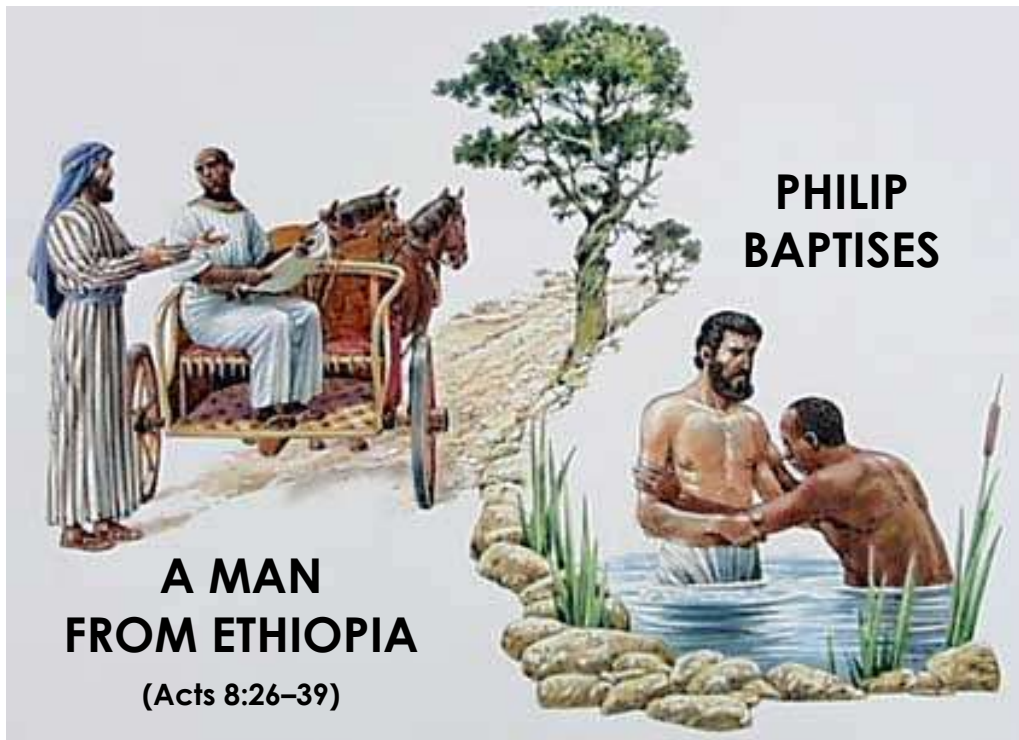
There's also a downloadable poster of a giant bubble encompassing a city. Media reporters are interviewing a girl about the bubble. It might be fun to imagine this is a 'Baptism bubble' surrounding your city or town and role-play the questions that might be asked and the answers given.

**'www.soapbubbler.com'** is an all-purpose soap bubble site with a whole range of information about the social and scientific aspects of soap bubbles. It includes stories of old-fashioned soap bubble parties.

Since the recipes and activities on these US sites may call for materials not readily available here, you look at **'members.ozemail.com.au'** which has lots of bubble science for enquiring minds.



Don't forget the simple fun of going outside, blowing bubbles and watching them drift off into the atmosphere.



## A MAN FROM ETHIOPIA

(Acts 8:26–39)

## PHILIP BAPTISES

Picture from dkiimages.com

**THIS STORY** took place after Jesus died, came back to life and went to heaven.

**ETHIOPIA** is a country in Africa. An important man from Ethiopia had gone to Jerusalem looking for answers to a lot of questions he had about life, God, faith and things like that.

**PHILIP** was a follower of Jesus and a member of the church in Jerusalem.

When the man from Ethiopia was starting to go back home, an angel of God gave Philip a special job. 'At noon today I want you to walk over to the road to Gaza'. Philip went and met the man coming down the road riding in a chariot and reading the scroll of the Bible written by the prophet Isaiah.

Running up alongside, Philip asked, 'Do you understand what you're reading?' The man answered, 'How can I without some help?' and invited Philip into the chariot with him.

The passage he was reading was had to do with a person who suffered for others without complaining.

'Tell me,' said the man, 'Who is the prophet talking about: himself or some other?' Philip grabbed his chance. Using this passage as his text, he told the man all about Jesus.

When they came to a stream of water, the man said, 'Here's water. Why can't I be baptized?'

He ordered the chariot to stop. They both went down to the water, and Philip baptized him then and there.

When they came up out of the water Philip went off, but the man didn't mind. He had what he'd come for and went on down the road as happy as he could be.

### THINK AND TALK ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS

- ▶ Who are the characters in the story?
- ▶ What do we know about each one?
- ▶ Which one is most like you? In what way?
- ▶ Why do you think the Ethiopian wanted to be baptised?
- ▶ How is the story like what is happening here today?
- ▶ What do you think the Ethiopian told his friends back home about this experience?
- ▶ What do you think Philip told the other people in the church about this experience?
- ▶ What could you tell someone about what you've done in church today?
- ▶ What questions do you have about life and God and faith?
- ▶ How can you find answers to these questions?

## Remembering that you are

# Baptised to Be

**When facing with decisions and temptations** remember who you were baptised to be.

Saying the words 'I am baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' can help you tap into the power and protection God gives you.

**DAILY** remember that you have been baptised to be. Consider:

- hanging a framed Baptism certificate or picture of your Baptism, or Baptism symbol near your bed as a reminder you can see each day and night.
- praying the Lord's Prayer as a reminder that we are baptised to be
- part of God's family  
(Our Father)
- a worker in God's kingdom  
(Your kingdom come)
- obedient to God (Your will be done)
- trusting God for all your needs  
(Give us today our daily bread)
- a new, clean, forgiven person  
(Forgive us our sins)
- a person for whom Jesus has won victory over temptations and evil  
(Do not bring us to the test; deliver us from evil).
- reading verses from the Bible to help you to grow more and more into the person you were baptised to be.  
You may keep a bookmark in your Bible with the words 'I am baptised' and consider what you read in the Bible in terms of: What does this mean to me as a baptised Christian?
- using your daily shower/bath or handwashing as a reminder to thank God for the water of your Baptism that made you clean and gave you new life.
- thinking of the life-giving Baptism water when you water plants or give water to a pet.

**WEEKLY** worship with your Church family — people who, like you, have been baptised. It can be a weekly reminder of who you are because of your Baptism.

In worship you will be in the presence of God, you will learn more about God, and you will praise and thank God, in whose name you were baptised.

You may experience again the spiritual drowning of Baptism as you confess your sins and the spiritual rising to new life as you hear that God has forgiven you.

The Baptism of other people may remind you of your own Baptism.

**EVERY YEAR** celebrate the anniversary of your Baptism.

The first Christians took little notice of their birthdays, but had great spiritual celebrations on the anniversary of their Baptism. Such a celebration can be a significant Christian family tradition.

- If it is feasible, take the day off work or school and visit a restful water-side spot where you can meditate on what God has made you to be in Baptism, how God has been at work in your life in the past year, and how you want him to direct you in the coming year.
- Have a party/meal to celebrate. Invite people who were a part of your Baptism event and/or invite some non-Christian friends that you can tell about Baptism through your celebration.
- Bring out any mementoes you have of your Baptism event: photos, video, worship program, certificate, napkin, candle . . . and think/talk about the memories they evoke.
- Light a candle as you have a brief service: read a Bible passage about Baptism, repeat the Apostles Creed, pray the Lord's Prayer and/or your own prayer of thanks for your Baptism.
- Blow bubbles.