















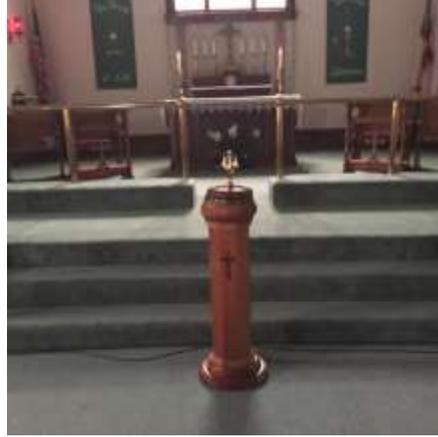


# Preaching Baptism Year Round

*A Rationale and Resource for Preaching on Holy Baptism  
Throughout the Year(s)*



**“We’ve come a long way!”**



**“But we have a long way to go!”<sup>1</sup>**

**BY**

**The Rev. Dr. James Bradley Shumard**

---

<sup>1</sup> Photo of the tiny font in Christ Church, Douglas, Wyoming, taken in April, 2016.

## Contents

Chapter		
One	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Two	<b>The Challenge and Impetus</b>	<b>10</b>
Three	<b>A Rationale</b>	<b>15</b>
Four	<b>Theologies of Baptism</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>Perceptions of Theologians and Denominations</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>Perceptions from <i>The Service of Holy Baptism</i></b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>Perceptions from Scripture</b>	<b>33</b>
Five	<b>My Personal Theology of Baptism</b>	<b>41</b>
Six	<b>Additional Sundays &amp; Seasons for Preaching Baptismal Throughout the Year</b>	<b>50</b>
Seven	<b>Baptismal Sermons</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>Easter</b>	<b>59</b>
	<b>Pentecost</b>	<b>66</b>
	<b>All Saints' Day</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>The Baptism of Our Lord</b>	<b>78</b>
Eight	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>86</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>88</b>

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### “Water is Thicker than Blood!”

I am persuaded along with many others that the ritual life of a community is formative of that community. For us, that means that the liturgy is formative of the church. In the liturgy, in the midst of our praise of God, we remember and act out our identity. We describe to ourselves who we are, what we intend and hope for. It is on this basis that the absence of congruence and coherence regarding the baptismal liturgy has its subtle and unremitting impact on the self-understanding of the Episcopal Church.

William Seth Adams <sup>2</sup>

The two contrasting pictures on the Title Page paint more than a thousand words. The purpose of this paper is to provide a rationale and impetus for preaching Baptism year-round in order to help accelerate the Church’s move from living out of the tiny font and into the “life-size” one. Resources, such as Prof. Turrell’s book, *Celebrating the Rites of Initiation*, are helping accelerate this process as they provide clergy direction as they incarnate the service from *The Book of Common Prayer* and these liturgical actions do preach. An intense *Catechumenate* is helping both our clergy and laity to *study, teach and learn* about baptism which also accelerates this movement.

This is also written to be a resource for proclaiming Baptism throughout the Church Year, season after season, year after year. Excerpts from theologians and writers are included in this paper in hopes that these profound statements which caught my attention, will catch the attention of those who may use the quotes as resources for sermons on baptism. A more informal personal commentary is made from time to time as ‘one preacher to another,’ and all

---

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Meyers, *Baptism, and Ministry, Liturgical Studies One* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1994), p. 12. Quoted in Shumard, James Bradley, *A Baptismal Model for Ministry in the Episcopal Church, Connecting Liturgy, Baptism and Ministry Year-Round in Ways which are Congruent with The Book of Common Prayer in order to remind the Baptized of their Baptismal Ministry*, (Cambridge: Episcopal Divinity School, 2010), p. 5.

bracketed parts are my commentary even within excerpts from other authors. There are various parts that are bold to aid the preacher looking for bits and pieces to use in sermons.

Thomas Long quotes Augustine saying that ‘the purpose of a sermon is to teach, to delight and to persuade.’<sup>3</sup> What we do and say; how we say and do it; and how often we repeat and preach on the words and acts, create great opportunities to teach, delight and persuade.<sup>4</sup> People’s hearts and minds are open in unique ways while engaging a sermon and that is significantly different from listening to instruction or participating in a baptismal service. It will take *preaching, teaching, and performance* to move parishes from the implications for baptism reflected in the image of the ‘barely get wet’ font toward the deep meanings for baptism of the “Jump in, the water’s fine!” large font. The best diet for inwardly digesting baptism and its meanings is in regularly tasting from all three of these food groups.

On a personal note, part of what inspired this project, has been conversations with congregations and individual parishioners over the last twenty years up to and including my current parish. Parishioners have often communicated a very surface understanding, at best, of baptism and *The Baptismal Covenant*. These range from telephone conversations that begin with, “I would like to get my kid done” to “I don’t have a clue as to what the baptismal vows are.” Every font in the seven parishes I have served, look more like the tall thin shallow ‘dip the tip of one’s fingers’ font than the large deep ‘let’s take a bath’ font. I cannot even remember seeing a font in many Episcopal Churches that I have visited.

In preparing for an upcoming baptism of adults and children on *All Saints’ Day*, I have placed a moderate size copper bowl over the tiny opening that even one bird could not bathe in,

---

<sup>3</sup> Long, Thomas, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of people’s response to words and actions around proclaiming baptism will be offered.

and which sits within a ‘5000’ pound concrete pedestal that has been in the church ‘forever.’ We are still seeing those results today (Karl Barth “...called for ‘responsible baptism’ in place of ‘half baptism’, which he felt had become the norm in Christendom,”<sup>5</sup>). Some parishioners are excited about the bowl, but the normal response has been, “What’s wrong with the tiny bowl that is in the font?” “All you need is a few drops.” “Why are you making such a big deal out of baptism?” We actually have had a number of baptisms, including where I splash the congregation with two branches as we process back to the altar. This is all taking place in a congregation that is excited that I am here and where I have talked about, preached about and fully enacted baptism for nine months. We have a long way to go despite all the work around baptism that I have done here!

Maybe I have a long way to go as well, for even though my first doctoral thesis was on lifting up the symbols and meanings of baptism throughout the church year, I did not think to focus upon preaching baptism throughout the year. In fact, I don’t think I mentioned preaching baptism at all! I find that as a preacher, I rarely have preached on baptism other than at a baptism and then on only one or two aspects of the sacrament. *The Service of Holy Baptism* is so multifaceted and deeply layered that it would take many sermons to thoroughly preach it. We preachers, many who are also rectors and very busy with administration, pastoral care, multiple meetings and visits, could use a resource which would provide both impetus and ideas for preaching Baptism.

There are many books and treatises written by famous theologians and authors, both past and present, attempting to describe or ‘explain’ what happens in baptism and many disagree with

---

<sup>5</sup> Bryan Spinks, *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism, From Luther to Contemporary Practices*, (Yale University: Ashgate, 2006), 137.

one another. We Anglicans are fond of responding to someone who asks what we believe, “Come pray with us for forty years and you will begin to understand.” (“Lex orandi, lex, credendi”). There is a spectrum of beliefs about baptism, from being born again to joining the church and there are a variety of experiences of baptism, from that of an infant who does not remember, to that of adults who experience rebirth. It is the suggestion of this paper that many mainline Christians need years of ‘living into baptism’ and years of baptism being preached, enacted and taught, to become more fully transformed by its meanings.

Preachers can accelerate the process of transformation of understandings of baptism that has already taken place since *The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) 1979* was instituted by parishes. Preachers can support and supplement *The Catechumenate* and the rich rite of baptism by intentionally and appropriately taking many opportunities to preach on the symbols, actions, values, history, ethics, sacrament and theology of baptism. This can be done not only in sermons throughout the liturgical year and years but within almost any liturgy and it is hoped that this paper may inspire readers/preachers to do just that.

...focus upon life-long post baptismal catechesis reinforces that for all in the faith community – infants, children, adults – new life begins in initiation and it is to this new life begun in water and the Holy Spirit that all are invited to return constantly for refreshment, renewal, and re-orientation in life.

Maxwell Johnson.<sup>6</sup>

The more that the People of God in the Episcopal Church are immersed in the experience, the proclamation, the understanding and formation of the sacrament and theology of baptism and

---

<sup>6</sup> Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Initiation, Their Evolution and Interpretation*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 465.

*The Baptismal Covenant*, the less phone calls about getting a child ‘done’ will be received by preachers. Maybe our parishioners will begin to experience Baptism in a deeper way.

For baptism, itself is the liturgical and sacramental center out of which we live; it is the watery Spirit-filled womb and tomb to which we are called to return time and time again to find a welcome place in our displaced lives. Indeed, the spiritual journey in Christ is a journey of both place and displacement, a journey of death and resurrection, of birthing pangs and the bringing forth of new life and the paradigm for all this is most certainly baptism.

Maxwell Johnson<sup>7</sup>

It may be preachers who access this resource, will find more reasons to refer to baptism in sermons -- if the entire sermon is not on baptism -- time and time again throughout the year and years, especially if they want to dive deeper into the theologies of baptism in the BCP.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p., 451.

## Chapter 2 The Challenge and Impetus

To be baptized then, is to receive a new existence in Christ, to become a new creation in union with God's crucified Messiah (cf. 2 Cor 5:17); it is to be made in the image for which we were originally created; it is, as the Eastern theologians remind us, to become a person. Baptismal identity creates the basis for Christian worship, discipleship, ethics, spirituality and mission. It embodies our justification, sanctification and vocation. The waters of baptism are the wellspring for a life of faith, hope and love.

John Vissers, a Reform Theologian<sup>8</sup>

The above quote is beautiful and true, yet idealistic, for more than likely many (Should I say 'most?') parishioners of any denomination do not "get that" or fully understand their lives in those terms at any single point in their baptismal spiritual journey, for baptism is a journey that does not begin or end with baptism.

A typical journey for an Episcopalian in terms of their church life goes like the following. I have shared this 'process' numerous times with a variety of people and in a variety of circumstances (members and ex-church members) and heads nod in agreement every time this is described:

1. An infant is baptized into the Church by parents who do not bring the child back until she is of school age.
2. The child attends church until confirmed and after receiving the car keys, leaves.
3. The teen returns to church Christmas, Easter and at other visits to parents.
4. The young adult returns to get married and leaves
5. They return to get their children baptized, each time leaving church for a sojourn in the world.
6. The parents think to themselves when the children get to school age, "Maybe we should return to church and raise our children there."

---

<sup>8</sup> Gordon L. Heath and James Dvorak, ed., *Baptism, Historical, Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, (Eugene, Oregon: PICKWICK publications, 2009), 76-77.

7. The parents return, bringing their children to church and volunteer in so many areas of ministry that they own the T-shirt, “Been there. Done that!”
8. By the time their youngest has been confirmed, received the car keys and left church, the parents leave church having been burned out.
9. The parents, as they grow into their fifties and sixties begin to think more deeply about their spiritual journey and return to church where they finally remain until they have a great burial service and return to the Lord! Alleluia!

Respecting and anticipating this journey and understanding that understanding and living into baptism is a life-long affair, may encourage priests to say, “Yes!” to the ‘accidental parishioner’ who requests that their child be ‘done.’ This will mean more baptisms and give the preacher an opportunity to preach on baptism more often and that benefits all who are there. Have we not all heard stories of priests either saying, “No!” to a request for baptism by strangers or long gone ex-parishioners – who will remain ex-parishioners for the rest of their lives when they get the “No!” -- or the priest forces them into a long set of classes or a Catechumenate program, rather than as Philip did when he simply responded to the Ethiopian’s request to be baptized, “Yes!”

Recognizing that young previous or accidental parishioners seeking to get married in the Church are actually on that baptismal journey, may encourage priests to say “Yes!” to their requests as well. God is at work in the lives of all on this spiritual journey and we priests had better be ready to respond even as the ‘accidental and future’ parishioners are responding to the nudges of the Holy Spirit in their lives!

Those who have been through an intense Catechumenate still may not understand the theologies expressed by these theologians or the words in *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP). The theological and sacramental depth and meanings underlying baptism as expressed and enacted in *The Service for Holy Baptism* in the BCP are too deep and wide to fully permeate the

mind, body and soul of any of us on any given Sunday assigned for baptism or in a single service of Holy Baptism or a momentary intense instruction on Baptism.

Above all, churches are challenged to see the rite of baptism in a wider context of the journey of faith in the community of faith. "...In *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the section on baptism states that from the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages, and the journey may be covered rapidly or slowly (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libera Editrice, para. 1229.). The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect or mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop."

Bryan Spinks<sup>9</sup>

*The Service for Holy Baptism* is about so much more than the rite. Ruth Meyers quotes A. Theodore Eastman, Bishop of Maryland, who suggested, "If used properly, taken seriously and followed to its logical conclusions, the [1979] rite of Holy Baptism could revolutionize the liturgical, political, educational, and missionary life of the Episcopal Church."<sup>10</sup> Baptism and *The Baptismal Covenant* do have transformative power! This is all slowly happening in the church, but preaching on baptism regularly will increase the pace.

Too often, many of the liturgical and verbal parts of the baptismal liturgy get lost in the event of the day or overshadowed by some obvious aspects of the ceremony. The preacher is challenged to bring to life every aspect of Baptism and to help listeners hear, learn, mark and inwardly digest the appetizers, the main courses and the desserts. Preaching on baptism or different theologies of baptism for several Sundays leading up to an actual baptism – especially if baptisms are few and far between – will make the day of the baptism(s) more meaningful and

---

<sup>9</sup> Bryan Spinks, *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism, From Luther to Contemporary Practices*, (Yale University: Ashgate, 2006), 162-163.

<sup>10</sup> Ruth Meyers, ed., *Baptism and Ministry, Liturgical Studies I*, (New York: Church Publishing, 1994), ix. Quoted in Shumard, p. 7.

the preacher may not even have to preach on baptism on that Sunday.<sup>11</sup> Preaching on the entire baptismal liturgy throughout the year and through the years will aid *The People of God* in *The Episcopal Church* (TEC) to be more fully immersed in the richness, history and implications of the sacrament of baptism as well as in the rule of life verbalized in *The Baptismal Covenant*. All of this may connect it to their personal lives, wherever they are on their baptismal life long journey as they live their lives in the world and help them to hear what the Spirit wants to say to them!

Episcopalians learn best what they learn in the Liturgy, not to mention that on any given Sunday, in my life long experience of attending and/or being in charge of Sunday School and serving on Diocesan, Provincial and National Christiana Formation Committees, only a small minority of total adult members attend Sunday School or any educational opportunity. I have not personally met any who have gone through an intense catechumenate. Limiting instruction, catechesis and preaching to Sunday School or Catechumenate classes; actual baptisms; the four Sundays a year recommended by the BCP; and/or parish feast days and bishops' visits, could also mean that the newly baptized may be thrown into a congregation which does not fully embrace baptismal values<sup>12</sup> and understandings. This may confuse the newly baptized.

What they have been taught in *The Catechumenate* may happen in Baptism but its implications and meanings will need regular nurture through proclamation and regular liturgical action in order to seep into their very beings. Gerard Kelly, a Roman Catholic theologian, puts it this way: "In other words, baptism frames a whole life, and is not a single moment."<sup>13</sup> *The*

---

<sup>11</sup> Our All Saints' Day and Pentecost services with baptisms were as vibrant or more as our Easter Service and attended by 40% more people than our normal Sunday attendance.

<sup>12</sup> Note the previous references to the majority of parishioners in my current parish.

<sup>13</sup> Heath and Dvorak, p. 229.

*Catechumenate*, The Sacrament [Liturgical Action] and Preaching could be the three-legged bath tub needed to truly get their feet, hands, heart, soul, and their whole body wet.

The good news is that Baptism and Eucharist are located at the heart of the BCP and are being lifted up by the leadership throughout the Church. There are numerous references to *The Baptismal Covenant* in General Convention resolutions, in church publications, in seminary classes and in parish profiles. The Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a joint statement on October 5, 2016 and part of it reads, “Our differences cannot prevent us from recognizing one another as brothers and sisters in Christ by reason of our common baptism.”<sup>14</sup> The People of God are slowly absorbing these values and meanings but it is the contention of this paper that this absorption of the meanings and implications for action contained within baptism and *The Baptismal Covenant* can be accelerated and needs to be regularly addressed as long as we are on this earth, by intentionally preaching on them year-round, year after year, and beyond.

---

<sup>14</sup> *Common Declaration by Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby*, Episcopal News Service: [episcopaldigitalnetwork.com](http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com), October 5, 2016.

## Chapter 3 A Rationale

*There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism!*  
*There is one God who is Father of all!*

One would think after working on two doctoral theses on baptism that I would think we should intensify our instruction and preparation for baptism and yet that is not my recommendation. There have been many books written about the importance of baptism, especially over the last thirty years. The Roman Catholic Church has implemented the *RCIA* classes and the Episcopal Church is taking *The Catechumenate* far more seriously. John Westerhoff, in his introduction to William Willimon's book on baptism, speaks of a long process of formation for those who want to be baptized, including the recommendation that the norm should be that people wait until they are young adults to go through the training and get baptized.<sup>15</sup> This is a great ideal but quite frankly, most of those young adults have already left church and do not return for years (Please see reference to the typical lifelong journey of an Episcopalian above). I have observed that in asking Episcopalians about their grown children and their siblings, that less than half of children who were raised Episcopalian, have returned to church on a regular basis, but that is a topic for another thesis.

Despite the enthusiasm of scholars, authors and ecclesiastical authorities about the depth of baptismal life, many of our people in the pew still do not appear to "live there." Living into our baptisms is a lifelong process that we need to engage and dine on regularly and due to the rarity of baptisms in so many small Episcopal churches, we need constant reminders and sermons on the subject. A person on their spiritual pilgrimage may be receptive at any moment.

---

<sup>15</sup> William Willimon, *Remember Who You Are, Baptism, a model for Christian Life*, (Nashville, Tn. The Upper Room, 1980), 11-13.

Baptism and its implications are more a curriculum for life and living than a one-time training experience. The majority of Episcopal churches are small [75 ASA or less] which means they may not have a baptism but once every other year or so at best. Even when a baptism is done, it may be that sermons on those days will be briefer than on a regular Sunday for a variety of reasons, not to mention the potential for crying children if a baby is being baptized.

We often teach and preach by what is not taught or preached, not said and not done, as well as by the placement of liturgical furniture and space, such as by having tiny semi-invisible fonts and few sermons on Baptism. Indeed, to quote Charlie Winters as he tried to get people to actually talk to each other in church as they awkwardly learned to exchange the Peace, “We taught people that they did not need to talk with one another without saying a word!”<sup>16</sup> We have also taught through absence of intentionality and absence of continually splashing our people with the waters of baptism [literally, figuratively and by proclamation] that Baptism is not of ongoing importance. However, those in power in the churches have begun to affirm reaffirming our vows. Note the fourth point in the *Lima Statement of the World Council of Churches, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*:

1. Baptism is complete initiation into the Body of Christ which is the Church.
2. The Bond established in Baptism is indissoluble.
3. Confirmation is a renewal rather than a completion of the baptismal covenant.
4. Baptism is unrepeatable, but should constantly be re-affirmed [My emphasis] during the baptized Christian’s “continuing struggle” and “continuing experience of Grace.”<sup>17</sup>

Neil Alexander puts it this way:

---

<sup>16</sup> Shumard, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Printing, Faith and Order Paper No. 111*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2007), 2-7.

“Instead of limiting their mode of thinking to either the cyclical or the linear, they proposed a more spiral visualization of the progress of time, i.e., a line that gradually moves forward while at the same time constantly circling back upon itself, living constantly in the tension between renewing those things that constantly “return” to us (the cyclical) while reaching toward the promise of what is to come (the linear).<sup>18</sup>

Neil Alexander

This is an accurate metaphor reminding us of our need to renew our vows regularly and preach baptism systematically year after year, for we need the seasonal reminder to fulfill our vows at so many different levels at so many different times in our lives.

The fact that the whole congregation is asked to recite *The Baptismal Covenant* reminds us of the corporate nature of every baptism. Not only is the entire congregation to be present but the entire congregation needs constant catechesis and constant reminding to continue in the apostles teaching and fellowship; the breaking of the bread and the prayers; rejecting evil and turning to Jesus; proclaiming by word and example the Good News of Jesus Christ; seeking and serving Christ in all people; striving for justice and peace; and respecting the dignity of every human being. Everything needed for catechumens is needed for all the baptized, year in and year out.

Paul most likely viewed the imagery and actions of baptism as important to understanding who we are as followers of the Messiah and in the Eucharist. He knew that his readers and listeners experienced baptisms regularly enough to relate to the imagery he used such as being buried with Christ, dying and rising with Christ and putting on Christ. Those who put together the BCP connected the two sacraments physically in the prayer book recognizing that they go

---

<sup>18</sup> Neil Alexander, *Celebrating Liturgical Time*, (New York: Church Publishing, 2014), 3.

hand in hand in terms of helping the people of God understand who they are in the context of who Jesus is and what God has done through Jesus.

Just as ‘we do this in remembrance of Jesus, the New Testament Christians and the Early Church experienced enough baptisms “doing this” regularly enough that they could easily relate to Paul’s metaphoric language. Once we begin having multiple baptisms multiple times every year, then maybe we will not have to preach so much on baptism. Paul, after all did not preach on baptism but used the well-known (to his readers and listeners) imagery of baptism to reinforce other sermons and treatises.

Experiencing and reflecting upon baptism can be as important to understanding the narrative of Jesus as experiencing and reflecting upon the Paschal Mystery and the Eucharist. Understanding baptism is crucial to understanding Eucharist in a similar way that understanding the Old Testament is crucial to understanding the New Testament. We do remember His death, we proclaim His resurrection and we await His coming, every time we do a baptism. There is both a realized and expectant eschatology expressed in baptism. We die with Christ, we rise with Christ and we await His return.

## Chapter 4 Theologies of Baptism

### PERCEPTIONS OF THEOLOGIANS AND DENOMINATIONS

Baptism is practiced by almost all denominations which claim to be Christian, which reveals the importance of being baptized. Baptism is part and parcel of professing to be and practicing as a Christian, yet what people through the generations have believed about baptism has a wide range of beliefs.

Is Baptism necessary...for anything? There is scriptural support for baptism being necessary to be a Christian such as the story recorded in Acts 2.37-38:

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins: and you shall receive the Holy Spirit."

Wolfhart Pannenberg says, "Faith in the Gospel without baptism is not yet Christian saving faith in its full sense."<sup>19</sup> One could use I Corinthians and the reference to baptism on behalf of the dead (which the Mormons practice) to speak about a biblical aspect of the real efficacy of baptism. A majority of Baptists, on the other hand, would, "...think of baptism as primarily a response made by man." "In baptism a person signifies his repentance toward God, his trust in God's mercy, and his surrender to obey God's will."<sup>20</sup> However, to sum up much of what Karl Barth says about baptism, "It is all about the work of Jesus, before, during and after baptism

---

<sup>19</sup> Bryan Spinks, *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism, From Luther to Contemporary Practices*, (Yale University, Ashgate, 2006), 146.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.155.

more than about what we say or do.”<sup>21</sup> Barth believed, “Water-baptism is thus a symbol of the fact we have been redeemed and not itself the means of redemption.”<sup>22</sup> His son, Markus put it this way, “The ultimate theological point...was that Baptism is not an unfailing tool which effects what it portrays, but is to be understood as confession, obedience, hope and prayer.”<sup>23</sup>

Jesus, in Luke 23.33-43, said to the thief on the cross who had not been baptized, “Today you will be with me in paradise!” Scripture, tradition and reason have rarely been consistent and preachers have the opportunity to clarify that fact as they try to clarify what happens in and at a baptism. The following are several different observations about the variety of views on Baptism:

In general, I am struck not only by the differences in the theology and practice of baptism across the various Traditions represented in these chapters, but also by the diversity within individual traditions.<sup>24</sup>

John Vissers,

Sometimes Friends comment that if the New Testament clearly required water Baptism, its instructions would be clearer and the approaches to baptism would be less diverse.<sup>25</sup>

Howard R. Macy, Quaker Theologian

The diversity arises largely because baptism is the point at which a broad and complex array of theological, liturgical, pastoral and social considerations converge. A change in my view of faith, salvation, scriptural hermeneutics, church order, Israel, Christ and culture, time or signs will probably change my view of baptism.<sup>26</sup>

Alan Hayes, Anglican theologian

---

<sup>21</sup> Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church on Baptism*, (Great Britain: D. R. Hillman & Sons Press, 1956), 1-25.

<sup>22</sup> Spinks, p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> Heath and Dvorak, p. 231.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p 238.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p 234.

It is important to remember that various theologies behind, beneath and within Holy Baptism are continually in orbit around one another at all times and throughout history, both within denominations and probably even in the minds of Jesus' followers, past, present and future.

Vissers notes the interdependence and interactions among denominations in light of the theology and practice of baptism. Some theologies of baptism are dependent upon the previous work on baptism of other denominations and are incorporated and expanded upon by another and/or codified.<sup>27</sup> Some theologies of baptism, as in so many theological arguments, are verbalized in contrast to other theologians or denominations. These theologies are still evolving. The following excerpt from Alan Hayes' response to essays on the theology of baptism by theologians from other traditions, spells that out so well and how theologies came to be and how that even more may come to be in the future. Preachers may be able to refer to some of these specific historical moments in time to preach about the moving target of theology of baptism (The bracketed comments are mine.).

In particular, a lesson I take from this book is that a Christian community's practice and understanding of baptism reflect the historical situation or situations in which these have taken shape. Seventeenth century Baptists...were repudiating an approach to baptism that was entangled in the contemporary social reality of Christendom. Luther was repudiating a medieval German Christianity that incorporated ancient ritual practices. Early Pentecostals, who came from a variety of denominations derived or adapted their understandings of baptism from the teachings of their former traditions [Over 50% of Episcopalians come from other traditions or no traditions and bring those beliefs with them and preachers need to remember that and never assume an Episcopalian has an Anglican understanding of baptism.<sup>28</sup>]. The Quaker founder, George Fox might have gone a different direction had he been fortunate enough to discover that rarity, a

---

<sup>27</sup> Heath and Dvorak, pp. 231-233.

<sup>28</sup> An example is an ex-Baptist who thinks that 'all this concern' around liturgy and furniture and buildings means nothing since salvation is the most important thing. Meaning in life or being loved by God may be the top priorities for other Episcopalians. All of this is to say that the variety of meanings about baptism still exist in the various minds and hearts of those who listen to sermons. The preacher would do well not to assume theologies when preaching on baptism.

religiously serious Anglican minister. Reformed theologians in the first generation were particularly concerned in their teaching on baptism to highlight and protect the new and controversial theology of justification by faith. An early leader of the Restoration movement was influenced by his avid reading of John Locke. Current Roman Catholic practices are rooted in the Second Vatican Council in departure from the Council of Trent. Orthodox Christians base their approach to baptizing Christians who are converted from other churches on St. Basil's response to Cathari converts, not on St. Augustine's response to the Donatist converts.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, as Bryan Spinks states, there are many crosscurrents within current church history. "The latter half of the twentieth century has been a time of considerable ecumenical activity. Theologians have tended to write for an ecumenical audience, or have sought to bring their denomination and tradition into dialogue with other denominations and traditions, seeking areas of agreement as well as pointing out areas of disagreement."<sup>30</sup>

*The Service of Holy Baptism* appears to cover and/or hint at the variety of theologies and beliefs about Baptism across time and denominations including the current ones. The service, like Paul's treatment of baptism, provides opportunities to reflect upon our beliefs, not just about Baptism, but about the work of Jesus Christ as reflected in the Apostles Creed. The vows echo Paul's taking the opportunity to speak about the ethics of Baptism and life in Christ.

Ruth Meyers, in referring to the indissolubility of baptism and Paul's experience of Christ living in Him, summarizes the theologies contained within the sacrament of Baptism in the BCP:

We who are many have become one Body of Christ. We who were not a people have become God's people. We who have been buried with Christ in his death have been made partakers of his risen life. We who have died to sin have been raised to new life in the Holy Spirit. By uniting us to himself, the Great High Priest and King of kings, ordains us to the royal priesthood of all believers and fills us with the Holy Spirit, forgives our sins, gives us a share in his new life in the communion of saints (the one

---

<sup>29</sup> Heath and Dvorak, p. 234.

<sup>30</sup> Spinks, p. 137.

holy, catholic and apostolic Church), sends us into the world in mission and looks forward to the day of redemption.<sup>31</sup>

The Anglican Church, not to mention all the Churches of Christendom, has never been of one mind on the theology of baptism or on what happens before, during and after baptism or even when to do baptisms. Alan Hayes reminds us that we have never been, nor are we, nor will we be of one mind at any particular time even though the BCP portrays a sense of unity.<sup>32</sup>

There have been so many debates around the theology of Baptism through the generations. Does the act effect grace? Is the act only a sign of Grace? What does it mean to die with Christ in baptism and be raised with Christ in this life now? When does the Holy Spirit come into a person's life? Does the bishop's laying on of hands and anointing impart Grace or indicate Grace, impart the Holy Spirit or confirm the Spirit? When are our sins washed away and how often? Is there such a thing as *Original Sin*? Should baptism wait until the child is old enough to understand?

*The Thirty-Nine Articles* (pages 897- 876, BCP) in the historical documents section of the BCP lays out some of the theologies as a way to combat the thinking behind other theologies, but the BCP, though referring to a variety of theologies, does not spell them out in the service. This reflects our Anglican ethos of being liturgical rather than confessional and it is no accident that those Articles are in the *Historical Documents* Section of the BCP. Augustine and other theologians crystallized their theologies of baptism and grace and original sin in response to

---

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Meyers & Leonel Mitchell, *Praying Shapes Believing, A Theological Commentary on The Book of Common Prayer*, (New York: Seabury Press, 2016), 102.

<sup>32</sup> Heath and Dvorak, p. 111-135.

contrary opinions about human beings and God and sometimes like Paul, they, and particularly their disciples, went overboard in particular arguments.

Paul, in fact, more often than not, refers to Baptism as a way to respond to issues within the church. Scripture does not offer a comprehensive understanding of baptism. Paul does not offer a comprehensive understanding of baptism. In fact, baptism is rarely the primary topic of discussion for Paul. He ‘uses’ the popular experience and understanding and his understanding of baptism, usually to reinforce other theological or ecclesiological arguments he is making, whether about unity in the Church, bad behavior in the Church, a call to better behavior in the Church, or understanding what Christ has done for the Church. This is so crucial to understanding the tone in which we preach and teach about baptism, for we have no significant sermons on baptism in Scripture.

Then there were the theologians who expanded upon what the giants, such as Augustine and Calvin, wrote and took them farther than the original theologians intended. This is all to say that we see, do and perform our theology *through a glass darkly*.

What we read in the BCP calls us to reflect upon the theologies behind and underneath the words so it is worthwhile to address some here. The words and meanings in *The Service of Holy Baptism* span, hint and pay homage to the variety of meanings of the sacrament that generations, denominations, and theologians have professed and expressed through almost 2000 years, including being saved; having sins and *Original Sin* washed away; dying and rising with Christ; being incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church; being anointed into the royal priesthood; being sealed by the Holy Spirit; being marked as Christ’s own forever; being made heirs to the Kingdom, being born again; being called to ministry and a code of conduct; having

the laying on of hands; and repenting and turning to Jesus Christ. Most of these ‘theologies’ can be found in the 27<sup>th</sup> article of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (Page 873 of the BCP).

Karl Barth covers the themes and theologies of baptism even as he implies that they do not necessarily happen in or at the time of baptism.

But what happens in Baptism is neither God, nor Jesus Christ, nor the covenant, nor grace, nor faith, nor the church. It bears witness to all these events which God in Jesus Christ makes a man [Barth’s word] His child and a member of His covenant, awakening faith through his grace and calling a man to life in the Church. Baptism testifies to a man that the event is not his fancy but is objective reality which no power on earth can alter and which God has pledged Himself to maintain in all circumstances. It reinforces to him that God has directed all His words and works towards him and does not cease so to do.<sup>33</sup>

The *World Council of Churches* puts it, “Baptism is both God’s gift and our human response to that gift.”<sup>34</sup> Marion Hatchett summarizes the initial theologies in Christian baptism as he speaks of how early Christians reinterpreted baptism from the Jewish baptismal traditions:

The act was reinterpreted in terms of the Christian Gospel: it meant a cleansing from the blood of Jesus, new birth in Christ, death and resurrection in Christ, incorporation into His Body, the “mark” and “seal” of Christ’s Sonship, and His anointing (as kings and priests were anointed), to receive the Holy Spirit to confess one’s faith in Christ, to swear one’s loyalty to Him.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, baptism has an eschatological aspect even as it is done in the present while reflecting the past. “Its [baptism] power lies in the fact that it comprehends the whole movement

---

<sup>33</sup> Spinks, p. 137.

<sup>34</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 25 anniversary printing, (Geneva Switzerland, 2010), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1980), 252.

of sacred history.”<sup>36</sup> The words from our Sunday Eucharist reflect the reality of Christ’s work, past, present and future, that we discover in Baptism as well as Eucharist:

*Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.*

Laurence Stookey says, “Baptism pushes us into the future, even as it helps us to understand the tradition of the Church and to live as contemporary disciples.”<sup>37</sup> Eugene Brand says, “The passion, death and resurrection of Christ are contemporary in the baptismal celebration.”<sup>38</sup> The Sacrament of Baptism and Eucharist reflect both realized and anticipated eschatology, the work of Jesus Christ, past, present and future and our response to all the above. Susan Wood clarifies this as she explores the ecumenical dimensions of the doctrines of baptism:

Sacraments memorialize the past and anticipate the future within present symbolic events and symbolic time, concentrating past and future within a present event. Within the ritual time of the liturgy, past and future are gathered into the present moment through memorial (anamnesis), presence and anticipation. Thus, in baptism, when we participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, these past events are brought into the present. When we rise sacramentally to new life with Christ and participate in the new creation, the fullness of that new life and new creation still await us in the eschaton.<sup>39</sup>

The sacrament itself may reflect all the theologies and doctrines, yet holds them both firmly and lightly and in tension with one another. We would do well to hold our own theology of baptism

---

<sup>36</sup> Spinks, p.138.

<sup>37</sup> Laurence Hall Stookey, *Baptism, Christ’s art in the Church*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982),16.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel C. Brockopp, Brian L. Heige and David G. Truemper, editors, *Institute of Liturgical Studies Occasional Papers*, (Valparaiso, Indiana: Institute of Liturgical Studies, 1981), p. 128.

<sup>39</sup> Susan K. Wood, *One Baptism, Ecumenical Dimensions of the Doctrine of Baptism*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press), 2009.

lightly. Sermons and doctrines are to be pondered, meditated and chewed upon, rather than codified and inflicted or spewed upon others.

One doctrine or belief that most, if not all Christian denominations would agree upon about baptism, is that the newly baptized are incorporated into the church and/or into the greater ‘one holy catholic and apostolic’ Church of Christ. The congregation also takes responsibility for the nurture in the faith of the newly baptized. These two aspects of initiation into the church, are pretty well common among denominations.

### **PERSPECTIVES FROM *THE SERVICE OF HOLY BAPTISM***

Reflecting on the theologies of baptism is best done in the context of all of these moments in time. *The Book of Common Prayer* presents, professes, declares and alludes to the variety of theologies of baptism in the words spoken and actions performed during a baptism. These words and actions both declare a truth and cause us to meditate and chew on, as well as to wonder and preach about them. It could be said that the BCP taps into Paul’s ‘use’ of baptism as an opportunity to preach about other theologies and The Baptismal Covenant and vows reflects Paul’s emphasis on what we believe and how we behave in the context of what happens in Baptism.

<i>Celebrant</i>	<i>There is one Body and one Spirit;</i>
<i>People</i>	<i>There is one hope in God’s call to us;</i>
<i>Celebrant</i>	<i>One Lord, on Faith, one Baptism;</i>
<i>People</i>	<i>One God and Father of all.</i>

BCP, p. 299

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your

calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4.1-6

*The Book of Common Prayer* paraphrases the piece from Ephesians to begin *The Service for Holy Baptism*. This appeal for unity in baptism echoes Paul's appeals for unity in Baptism and in the diversity of gifts in the midst of what the Nicene Creed calls the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

*“In it [baptism]we are buried with Christ in his death;  
by it we share in his resurrection;  
through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit” (p. 306, BCP).*

Paul preached on the actions that the people experienced in baptism so we preachers might do well to sometimes follow his example. They saw catechumens go down under the water and rise up. They saw the white robes “put on.” Paul used this baptismal imagery to speak to what it means to experience the death of the old self and birth of a new self, to ‘put on’ Christ and to urge his people to live lives worthy of new life.

Paul describes that experience as he speaks of dying and rising with Christ. Does this actually happen in the act of baptism or does Paul use the act of baptism to describe the experience and/or remind people of the experience of many Christians? (See the following below on Romans 6.) Paul, as that famous professor, whose name I cannot remember, simply says over and over again in so many ways, “Remember your baptism!”

“Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.” (Page 306, BCP). What does it mean to be reborn by the Holy Spirit? Is this the charismatic experience of the apostles at Pentecost; or of the Gentiles in Cornelius' household to whom Peter preached; or through the laying on of Paul's hands on some disciples who (apparently to Paul) had not received the Holy Spirit in

their baptism which was the baptism of John the Baptist (Acts 19.1-7.); or the experience of Dennis Bennett and the many who experienced the Charismatic renewal in the 1970's?

John 3.16 speaks of being born of the Spirit and water. Is this a theological concept to be lifted up at baptisms? Once again, this is a reality of many but not all Christians that is reflected in the ritual. It can reflect what has happened, is happening and/or will happen. It can be a calling to a future experience. It can reflect a deeper unseen reality that the Church declares at baptism.

*“That those who are here cleansed from sin and born again, may continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ.” (p.307, BCP).*

Are we cleansed from sin momentarily or is there an eternal ontological experience? What if the newly baptized did not mean it or was living in notorious sin? What if the minister did not mean it? Are those sins wiped away at baptism? Are we wiped clean of *Original Sin*? What is the risen life in Christ and what is the ongoing experience of that for members of a congregation? Is it a current reality in the rite or is it a calling, as Paul would say, to live the life we were intended and raised to live? Is it a ‘recalling’ of what has already happened? Theologians and church officials have answered those questions in a variety of ways and in ways which contradict one another.

The preacher may want to preach on the Sacrament itself and Augustine gives a starting point where while focusing upon the words spoken, says,

“The word is joined to the water and the result is a sacrament, itself becoming in a sense, a visible word as well...Whence the power of water is exalted as to bathe the body and cleanse the soul, if it is not through the action of the word; not because it is spoken but because it is believed.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, Maxwell, ed., *Sacraments and Worship, the Sources of Christian Theology*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), p. 2.

Augustine reveals a gravitational pull between the act, the medium, the words and belief and in that tension, we discover sacraments, “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.” (*The Catechism*, BCP, page 857.).

*“Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, the Church.” (p. 298 BCP).*

What does it mean to be a full member of the Body of Christ? Speaking pastorally, the preacher may want to preach about all God’s children coming to the Communion Table, not for a blessing from the priest but to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. There are still many parents who will not let their children receive communion before they are confirmed even though they are baptized. Preaching about the completeness of the rite of Baptism in receiving Eucharist is an opportunity to help these parents understand that.

Most mainline denominations view baptism as entry into the Church, meaning the one holy catholic and Broad Church, the Body of Christ, though there are a few who differ. Hayes notes “I also continue to be struck by the fact that Baptists alone, of all the traditions represented in this collection, have made a particular theology and practice of baptism the distinctive mark of denominational identity. <sup>41</sup>”

The service in the BCP makes clear that we are baptized into the whole Body of Christ and the preacher who is preaching to some ex-Baptists and others who may pick up their theology from the ‘streets of television,’ may want to take an opportunity to note that no one is baptized an Episcopalian or a Presbyterian, Roman Catholic or a Methodist, but as a Christian

---

<sup>41</sup> Heath and Dvorak, p. 233.

(This is also a good time to remind them it is the Lord's Supper, not a particular denomination's Supper.). The point is that we are grafted into both and baptism, if not making it happen, is a symbol and reminder that it has happened, is happening and will happen. This could be a theme for preaching baptism on *All Saints' Day*.

*"You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ own forever!" (p. 308, BCP).*

What is it about 'forever' that people often do not get? Doubts about this indissolubility of baptism come up regularly in counseling sessions and comments heard by priest and preacher, especially when the people have been brought up in other traditions and this applies to the majority of people in our pews. What we read at funerals from Romans 8 reflects this reality...that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, neither height nor depth, nor principalities nor powers, neither life nor death, which can translate to neither doubt nor faith, neither church attendance, nor absence, neither behaving badly nor doing good works, nor baptism or the absence of baptism, etc. This addresses the questions of "backsliding" and assurance. Communicating this reality to the people of God can set the stage for a spiritual journey that grows into the other realities of Baptism.

*"Confess the faith of Christ crucified; proclaim his resurrection and share with us in his eternal priesthood." (p.308, BCP).*

Now is the time for the newly baptized – and all the baptized-- to be able to share one's experience and faith. We are the royal and eternal priesthood ("preacher-hood") of all believers after all! All the baptized are ordained, set aside for the ministry of proclamation, blessing, healing and reconciliation. How shall preachers help equip the saints to be priests for the world?

Scripture itself tells how the Spirit moves in a way that institutions cannot control. Sometimes the Spirit falls during baptism and sometimes the Spirit falls before baptism. Paul discovers a group of disciples who had been baptized but not received or even heard of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19.1-7). The Ethiopian says to Philip in Acts 8, “Here is some water. What is to prevent me from being baptized?” (No great catechesis takes place.). The criminal on the cross was “saved’ without baptism (Acts 23.43). Martyrs who were catechumens were considered baptized in their own blood. There is little catechism for anyone baptized in the New Testament stories. Catechesis more often than not, came after baptism such as in Paul’s case (Acts 9).

It is in light of mystery and gifts that we reflect upon the theologies of Baptism expressed in Scripture and by numerous theologians and movements within Christendom, recognizing that Christendom has rarely agreed upon, (and probably never will) what baptism is or what happens in it. It is amazing how so many theologians have sharply disagreed on theology and ecclesiology with such a sense of clarity, as though they knew the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. History has shown over and over again how wrong were those who were so sure they were right. Theologians would do well to preface their remarks with Paul’s words, “We see/view/do/teach/profess theology and liturgy through a glass darkly.” Too often through history, those who proclaimed their version of the truth as absolute, often ended up executing those who veered from their particular version of the truth.

*The Service of Holy Baptism* in the BCP covers the primary theological bases and experiences of baptism and recalls the work of Christ in us, through us, before us and after us. The rite of Baptism is as much, if not more, for the congregation as it is for the ones being baptized, for we need constant reminders. This is why continued preaching on baptism and renewing the Covenant can be so important.

## Perceptions from Scripture

Despite the historical disagreements about theologies of baptism within the theological communities and within most of Christendom itself, it does not appear that Baptism or the theologies reflected in it were controversial within Scripture. A mutual understanding of Baptism often appears to be presumed by the writers of the New Testament. Paul assumes his readers agree with him about baptism and once again we are reminded that more often than not Paul uses the imagery and theology behind baptism to make a point. Still no discussion on the theologies of Baptism could take place without looking more deeply into a few classical pieces of Scripture that relate to Paul's themes in baptism: dying and rising with Christ, finding unity in Christ through baptism, putting on Christ and being baptized in the name of Christ and not in the name of another person,

Paul, in Romans speaks of dying and rising with Christ and we typically read this during the Easter Vigil.

What then are we to say? Should we continue to sin in order that grace abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

Romans 6.1-11

This says it all! Paul explains what happens in baptism and what happened on the cross and what happens to us (See Colossians 2. 8-15<sup>42</sup> and I Timothy 2.11-12.). Paul is attempting to

---

<sup>42</sup> Paul's authorship is questioned here, though it fits with Pauline thought.

lead his readers and listeners into understanding that they need to let go of (let die) their old ways and live lives worthy of the sacrifice Jesus made. *The Baptismal Covenant* and vows are congruent with Paul's call to live lives as living sacrifices.

Paul is also wanting to reinforce to Gentiles that they have been born again as legal heirs along with those of Hebrew descent, to all the rights and privileges of being born a Jew, without all the rites and legalism. Paul, as usual, is not teaching about Baptism but using the 'sacrament' to urge his readers to live lives worthy of Baptism.

Paul (Saul) of course was using his own spiritual experience of letting die his zealousness for the Pharisaic ways and rising to live the 'zealous' Way of Jesus, the way of the cross, the way of being born again, the way of a new beginning. Paul is more often than not encouraging the Gentile converts to give up their old "pagan" ways, though for Paul I can imagine in his own mind and in his own experience of combatting the "Judaizers" that he had to let go of/exchange his legalistic ways for the Grace of God. Like Martin Luther, this experience most likely colored a major bit of Paul's theology and ecclesiology and almost all of his teaching and reflections upon Baptism.

What Paul did not let die was his need to control, his passion for a cause and his radical confidence in his being "right." This comes across in many of his letters, though even he notes that he and we see through a glass darkly and that he/we continue to do the things we ought not to do and not do the things we ought to do. It just may take a person with this kind of single minded passion to accomplish the things that Paul did and to get himself martyred.

Taylor states that theologically [and maybe even ontologically], Baptism into the death of Christ continues to affect our lives. A mystical connection between going under the water equates with the death of Jesus on the cross. We don't have to be crucified, take up our cross, for in the

waters of baptism we are crucified with Christ. We identify with Christ's death in baptism; and the death of Christ on the cross is actualized in the waters of baptism.<sup>43</sup>

Speaking pastorally, dying and rising with Christ is probably a difficult concept for those who have not had either a 'born again' experience or understood their spiritual lives on a continuum of dying to self and rising with/to Christ. We live in a culture of 'finding oneself' and building one's own kingdoms rather than finding ourselves in Christ and losing ourselves, our very lives, for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Theologically speaking, our God chose the way of living, loving, dying and rising as God's way to engage us in redemption. There are echoes of this sacrificial living and dying throughout Scripture including the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, the images of Noah and the Flood, and Exodus. The themes of death and resurrection echo not only through this reading but through other readings at the *Easter Vigil* as well as *The Prayer of Thanksgiving* over the waters of baptism. The ancient tradition of connecting baptism to the waters of the Flood could be preached along with the current reference to the waters of the Red Sea. Being a new creation in Christ could be connected to the Creation story and the Spirit hovering over the waters of baptism and ourselves as well as the chaos.

Paul speaks of us finding our unity and common inheritance in Christ Jesus in Baptism and the imagery of Baptism.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we are all baptized into the one Body – Jews and Greeks, slaves and free – and we were all made to drink one Spirit. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

I Corinthians 12.12-31

Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in

---

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, 43.

Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you were baptized in Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3.23-29

Paul is speaking about ecclesiology; the workings and ministries of the church; connecting them to baptism in Christ; reminding all that we find our unity, our humility and our exaltation in the waters of Baptism and the work of Jesus Christ. We become one body in baptism and “water is thicker than blood” when it comes to ethnic, social, racial, economic, political parts of the Body. So often Paul recalls our unity found in baptism and reminds his readers that baptism calls us to unity in Christ Jesus.

There is no other way to put it in Galatians but that Paul is angry and miffed at some Christians. Paul uses foul language when he says of the legalists/judaizers he wished the knife would slip and they castrate themselves. Once again, Paul brings Baptism into an argument about something other than baptism. Paul is in the midst of reminding his readers that they have received the promise of Abraham through faith and that they are all one in Christ. He is reassuring them that in their baptism, they were incorporated into the family of Abraham, direct and legal heirs to the promises of God. It would appear that both in Baptism and in faith, this happens.

Paul writes earlier, “You foolish Galatians!...The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law [(I think many of us believe this though we do not verbalize it. Look at the theology verbalized by Job’s friends.) or believing what you have heard?” (Galatians 1-2). We can ask, “Did you receive the spirit through baptism, the laying on of hands, by faith, by believing?” The commentator in the Interpreters Bible connects this to wondering if parishioners could be swayed by any old theology that agrees with them except for

the experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> In fact one of the gifts and challenges for Episcopalians is that we are quite laid back in our expectations of people's theological understandings, so that at any given time there could be numerous theologies believed by the people. I hear creative theologies from parishioners all the time.

Regardless of theologies, Paul has inadvertently through his passion for Faith, given us a beautiful springboard for reflecting on the equal and unique call on all of the baptized to not allow race, gender, status or any other dividing line keep us from exercising the ministries that God calls us to. You can feel Paul's excited passionate movement in his writings as he uses baptism to drive home his points. Make no mistake, this is almost a throw-away line for him in his intense disappointment in the Galatians and later he even refers to the children of Hagar as slaves, almost reversing the implications of Galatians 3.28. However, in combination with what is said in other letters about our unity in Christ, it is clear this is a presupposed understanding of Paul regarding our unity in Baptism.

Paul is continuing to make a case for belief and faith vs. working to keep the law. Paul knows it failed him as a Pharisee. That is where he is coming from. The law was a custodian until Jesus came. Paul is really not taking the Old Testament (Tenakh) as it was intended. Paul is using baptism to prove a point rather than preaching on baptism. We are baptized into Christ, the singular seed of Abraham. You have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew or Greek, male or female, free or slave. There are no social or genetic distinctions. We are all legal heirs of Abraham.

Pastorally and even exegetically, we can speak on inclusiveness in so many of Paul's writings such as the two quotes above and in stories in Acts. "Can anyone forbid water for

---

<sup>44</sup> IB, vol. XI, p. 254.

baptizing those people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 11).

Some see the fact that Peter baptized the entire household as support for infant baptism. The real theme is about inclusiveness in the midst of a strong mindset of exclusivity and the rigorous ritual demands of the community. Peter of course asks this question rhetorically because in fact he knows he will be questioned and criticized, not just by misled believers, but by the infant institution that was forming as he preached and baptized. This scripture could be preached around social justice; respecting the dignity of every human being; about why we do infant baptism; or how the Gospel kept spreading throughout the known world. The preacher would do well to remind listeners of the implications of this experience, so much so that it had to be retold a couple of times in the midst of the writings. Not only was Peter worried about having witnesses but the writer of the Gospel wanted to make clear this was the work of God and not Peter. Once again baptism is intimately connected with the coming of the Spirit and the Spirit works as it pleases and is not confined to institutional sacraments.

Pastorally speaking, this scripture around baptism certainly applies to our lives and debates of the day. Who is in and who is out? Who are the first-class Christians and the nominal Christians? Are we living values reflected in being baptized into Christ? Are we going to accept as equal members to the party, anyone who is significantly different from those in power? How long did we struggle with accepting, ordaining, allowing on vestries and conventions, women, people of various races, of various gender preferences and sexual preferences, the old and young, the poor and wealthy?

This can all be tied into this not so original conflict in Acts and the early Church. Do we accept back into the church those who renounced Jesus to save their lives in light of persecution?

Are baptisms and ordinations valid in light of personal sin or heresy? The Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion were rocked by these ecclesiastical attitudes in 2003 with the ordination of Gene Robinson. Shall we allow divorced people to be full members of the one holy catholic and apostolic church? Scripture and ongoing church history leans in favor of inclusivity yet always it seems, with a fight.

Yes, Paul was always in a fight about such things and the Church, as it follows in the footsteps of Paul and the original apostles, who jostled for power and connection even as they walked along the way with Jesus, will always be in some sort of conflict. We can always turn to the Gospels, Acts and the Letters to continue unpacking these issues.

Baptism is a call to unity and a demand that our divisions cease. No political theological parties, evangelicals, progressives, liberals, fundamentalists, etc., should separate us from the love of God in Christ. There is one faith, one baptism, one hope and call. God calls us to unity of purpose, unity of identity, unity of theology. Paul calls upon our common experience of baptism to lead us from discord to unity and from bad behavior to good behavior. You were baptized in the name of Jesus not Paul and the efficacy of Baptism does not depend upon the theology of the church or person who baptized you. Paul was thankful he had not baptized very many. Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury refer to their common relationship in Baptism. Baptism is into Christ and the one universal catholic church of past, present and future. We hold this in common.

A challenge of churches today is to identify the fundamentals that hold us together: Baptism, Communion, Ordination, Mission, Outreach, Social Justice. May our politics and action derive their power from our baptism. There is no indication that the one who proclaims is

the one who (We could say it does not matter which denomination baptized a person.) baptizes. Peter commands that the people BE baptized [by others].

Paul uses his listeners'/readers' memory of baptism to goad his audience into good behavior. You were sanctified and justified through your baptism; now live lives worthy of that reality (See I Corinthians 6.1-20.). There is the reality of baptism and the living a life in thankfulness and acknowledgement at all times. If only we could keep in mind that we are all created in the image of God and are all one in Christ when we are tempted to argue, fight, discount one another, think of others as irredeemable and deplorables. Nicholas Taylor suggests congregations do some inner examination and explore what "bad behaviors" they, as a people, need to jettison. Bad behavior does not invalidate the sacrament but it may forfeit the benefits for all practical purposes.<sup>45</sup>

Behavior, unity, unique gifts, dying and rising with Christ, joining *the* Church or *a* church, and receiving the Holy Spirit are all part and parcel of Scriptural references to Baptism. All these aspects of baptism may not happen at every baptism or any particular baptism but all happen in Baptism.

---

<sup>45</sup> Taylor p. 43

## My Personal Theology of Baptism

My personal theology can also be mostly expressed through looking at the themes of the four feast days appointed in *The Book of Common Prayer* for baptisms. These Sundays are often preached with no baptisms since the majority of our churches are small, so over time the primary themes of Baptism could be proclaimed on these Sundays.

Baptism at Easter captures the full weight of Holy Week in Jesus being baptized with the baptism of suffering on the cross and dying and then rising from the dead. Easter is when I focus upon Paul's concept in Romans 6 (*The Easter Vigil*) of being crucified with Christ, being buried with Christ, being raised with Christ. The *Easter Vigil* takes us through salvation history concluding Holy Week with the resurrection.

Our old self is buried with Christ. The apostles' dreams for themselves were buried with Christ and they were finally open to recovering God's dream for them. We (or something) have to die in order to be raised to new life. The seed that was our old self is transformed into a new risen self, ready to participate in God's kingdom.

Though Easter Day is so much about joy, awe and wonder and Alleluia's, the recent smell of death is still detectable, as we engage this Risen Lord with shock and awe, wonder and amazement, curiosity and fear, and hopeful joy. We are surprised and a bit disoriented.

*Pentecost* is about being empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Risen Lord. We are reminded especially of the laying on of hands and anointing with oil of chrism. We are all reminded that "We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." Pentecost is a day for reflecting on what we are empowered to do and in this day and time when our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, is trying to motivate us to share the story of the

Risen Lord, the Ascended Lord, the very present Lord, we can be reminded to ask the Holy Spirit for the words and ways in which to share with others our experience, our understanding, our questions regarding the Christian Faith.

*All Saints' Day* is a time to focus upon the first vow of the baptismal covenant and how we are grafted into, born again into the Body of Christ, the Communion of Saints, the Church and the local church. We are made members of the Church Militant and quite frankly, the Church Triumphant. We are ever present with Jesus who is ever present with those who have gone before, those who are here on earth now and those to come. Christ has died! Christ has risen! Christ will come again! He is the same today, yesterday and tomorrow.

*The Baptism of our Lord* is a time to focus upon serving the world and how we will serve the Lord. Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, to decide upon a direction for ministry. We are baptized, not just in order to have our sins washed away, but in order to proclaim the Good News and join the church. However, the recipe is not complete without a call and response to ministry in the world.

There is no thesis on baptism in the New Testament. Baptism is most often brought up to make a point about something else whether it be division in the church, constraints of Judaism, ecclesiastical issues, or a theological point, etc. Ben Witherington puts it this way:

“The fact is, no New Testament document addresses itself to water baptism for its own sake. It is always mentioned as an illustration or exhortation to make some other point. One immediately thinks, “If baptism is all that important, why isn’t there more discussion about its whys and wherefores, its mode and meaning?”<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Witherington, Ben III, *Troubled Waters, The Real New testament theology of Baptism*, Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas, 2007, p. 7.

It could be that more often than not, baptism and its understandings were presumed and it is presumed that those who were reading the letters or listening to them would know the basic theologies of baptism. It is presumed they were taught as when Paul says in Ephesians so many times, “Do you not know?” He presumes they did. He may as well have been saying, “Let me remind you what you were taught and what you experienced in the rite of baptism.”

Paul’s experience of new birth is so transforming that he presumes all have had it or will have it. All will die to their old ways. Paul and we, know from personal experience that our old selves, indeed our current selves, still long to do what we ought not to do and not do what we ought to do. Paul says in Romans 7.19, “For I do not do the good I want to, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ!” Paul is often reflecting upon his personal experiences as much as stating a theology of baptism or a theology of Christ. It is a theology of personal transformation and of personal hope for the Christian. I can imagine Paul saying, “I would that all of you had this experience of death and new life.” “I will keep preaching it till my own death which is to come soon.”

Witherington says, “So far as we can see, Paul does not view water baptism itself as a means of grace. That transpires by the work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>47</sup> We would do well not to over theologize or over ‘sacramentalize’ baptism. We would do well to look at it in an “Elizabethan Settlement” mode, it being both/and/many, with no need to micromanage God or God’s intent. Jesus said to do this in remembrance of him and to baptize the nations. Just do it! Baptism is initiatory...a one-time event, yet an eternal reality.

---

<sup>47</sup> Witherington, p. 88.

Baptism is our personal and corporate response to salvation, to faith, to conversion, to being born again, to being convinced that Jesus is the way the truth and the life. Baptism is our personal response to the Gospel, combined with the response of the community. One does not baptize oneself. The community baptizes, but does not force baptism upon us. Quoting Ben Witherington again, “Baptism is indeed, as has been said so often, a visible word, the gospel for the eyes, but like the parables it has a quality of being veiled or mysterious so that only those who have eyes may see this visible word for what it is.”<sup>48</sup>

The primary theological, ecclesiological and ministerial themes of Baptism include:

1. Dying and rising with Christ, being washed clean of sin and being born again.
2. Being incorporated into the Body of Christ.
3. Resisting temptation while responding to the call of Christ.
4. Receiving the Holy Spirit, being anointed into the priesthood of all believers and being empowered to follow Christ.

I tend to agree with a number of theologians who suggest that the sacrament of Baptism does not [necessarily] ontologically effect or affect salvation, the washing away of sins, or our dying and rising with Christ, though it does effect and affect our being incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church universal, the Church militant, the Church triumphant. The imagery, actions and words in *The Service for Holy Baptism* call to minds and hearts what God has done and is doing and will do in Christ Jesus. It calls to mind our immersion in Christ; our putting on Christ; our dying and rising with Christ; our being anointed by the Holy Spirit; our being called to ministry; and the blessed assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ

---

<sup>48</sup> Witherington, p. 116.

Jesus including death. Do I believe God washes away our sins at baptism or in the water? Yes and no. Do I believe God washes us clean of sin? Yes.

Paul aptly uses the imagery of baptism as it was conducted in his day, as a springboard for his experience and his reflections on the work of Jesus Christ and our relationship to God in Christ Jesus, including using it to urge his readers to live lives worthy of baptism and to talk about unity of the Body and that we are legitimate heirs to God's Grace. However, as Nicholas Taylor says in his book on Paul, the world view of the day was that ritual acts truly "made it so" and Paul believed that baptism actually did effect a spiritual change in status, if not an internal spiritual change.<sup>49</sup> I think in many ways Paul would see Baptism as the seal on a legal document for something that has already been agreed upon and which could be referred back to when needed. I, like Paul, would see the imagery of baptism and the rite of baptism as a way to speak about what God has done and is doing and will do for us and in us. In some ways, I think we might be better served elaborating on the ritual as a visible Gospel rather than preaching on it at all.

Baptism is many things, one of which is our response to the Holy Spirit's call to immerse ourselves in a spiritual journey equipped with the assurance of salvation; the assurance of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit; and the assurance that we have been marked as Christ's own forever, recognizing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (How is that for competing with Paul's long sentences?) Thus, we can respond to God's call to ministry without worrying about the consequences to our own lives.

Baptism is more about reminding those who are baptized and those who observe baptisms of what God has done, is doing and will do than doing anything. Baptism is also a

---

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, Nicholas, *Paul on Baptism: The Theology, Mission and Ministry in Context*, (SCM Press: London), 2016, p. 12.

public and often personal response to what God has been doing in the Church and in the lives of those being baptized or in the case of infant baptism, in the lives of those bringing candidates to be baptized.

We know that it is about the Grace of God and God's faithfulness to us, more than about our faith. Baptism and Eucharist are in the midst of our faith journeys and we can connect our experience of God through them and in them. One does not need to be baptized in order to be saved. One can be anointed by the Holy Spirit before, during and after baptism. One is saved before, during and after baptism and it is through the work of God. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners and Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, before and after we have been baptized.

The dying and rising with Christ, I believe, was a personal experience of Paul's and I have had such an experience. This experience may not relate to some or even most of our parishioners. We should not assume they have had that experience so when we preach about it, we may be leaving them behind. Paul brings it up to remind those following traditionalists and "judaizers" that they need to let the law they hold so dear die so they can better embrace the work of God in Christ, who holds them so dear. Trying to keep the law keeps us focused upon ourselves and Paul and I believe we would be better to focus upon the Kingdom of God...proclaiming it and living it.

I must confess and readers might begin to strike a match to address my 'heretical' thoughts, that though for all practical purposes we live as though *Original Sin* exists, I do not see much Biblical support for Augustine's use of Paul's words to develop the theory of "original sin." Paul was stretching the point, as he does so often, to make a point when he implies we inherited our sin from Adam. Certainly, there are numerous examples in the Old Testament

where God presumes we can make the right choices. The concept or understanding of *Original Sin*, at best, is a minor note in the symphony of the New Testament, though sometimes I think Augustine treated it as the *Halleluiah Chorus* to Paul's 'symphonic' writings.

I believe that all of us do theology and read scripture through a glass darkly. Many theologians and reformers have done a good bit of their theology that originated in the various shades of glasses of their life circumstances and in resisting other theologies.

I do not believe we "physically" inherit the state of sin though the temptation to choose sin is in our very nature. (Biblically speaking, it appears that Enoch and Jesus were the only ones who did not live out the implications of *Original Sin*.) We just did not get it through Adam and Eve having sex, nor did Mary<sup>50</sup> or Jesus avoid it by being conceived outside of sexual intercourse. I do believe that for all practical purposes all human beings (Okay, maybe not Enoch or Jesus!) succumb to sin. There is no direct reference to *Original Sin* in *The Service for Holy Baptism* or in the rubrics, though there are many references to baptism washing away our sins and there is reference to it in the Thirty-Nine Articles in the back of the BCP.

Paul in trying to make a point, came up with an embryonic concept of sin and Augustine took Paul's reflections on the sin of Adam and codified what would be solidified in the West as *Original Sin*. Augustine of course, did this in response to Pelagius' teachings that all human beings could choose the good...especially corrupt church officials. Irenaeus Steenberg, an Orthodox theologian of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, finds a middle way. The quote is long but captures the 'via media' in interpreting *Original Sin*. The bracketed sections are my commentary along the way.

...for while the Orthodox Church has always insisted upon the historical and theological precedents for the baptism of infants, such a linking to an Augustinian concept of

---

<sup>50</sup> Roman Catholic doctrine speaks of the Immaculate Conception.

‘original sin’ sits quite at odds with customary Orthodox expressions of sin and human nature. While St. Paul, of course, accurately observes that death originates in sin, and that all are mortal and thus all are in some direct manner touched and affected by sin, the automatic assignment of sin to the level of nature as the means of explaining how these two observations fit together, is not something Orthodox theologians (including a majority of the early and eastern Fathers of the Church) have ever found terribly convincing. Indeed, the very idea that a newborn infant possesses original sin as a kind of “thing” or natural and quasi-physical possession that can be taken away from him by some ritual act, most Orthodox would see as an objectification and materialization [Hello! He captures the Western mind-set here!] of sin that comes dangerously close to Gnosticism.

Augustine may have pondered [Should we not all ponder rather than dictate or codify?] the possibilities of such a natural connection to sin to the constitution of the creature (although most expressions of Augustinian original sin go far further on the point than he ever would have condoned), but this is precisely the grounds on which Orthodoxy has viewed aspects of his legacy with a degree of reserve.

Surely an authentic Christian anthropology and doctrine of sin must stand in the middle [Steenberg sounds like an Anglican here in terms of mystery and the *via media*], recognizing that sin is always inherently an act, not a substance [Hello Aquinas!], but also understanding that it affects even those whose intellectual maturity has not yet attained the level of consent, of engagement, of reasoned participation. Thus, the mystery of baptism takes up the infant, innocent in her creation, yet still marred by the sin of the world [a both/and approach], washes her clean and joins her to the mystery of Christ’s redemptive life.<sup>51</sup>

Steenberg captures an Anglican type of view of the issues surrounding the concepts of *Original Sin* and what happens in baptism and I agree with what he has said (This sounds Orthodox!). Theologians would do well to leave plenty of room for mystery in all their contemplation, meditation and ‘dictation.’

Baptism reflects the theology of atonement. “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.” The mystery of baptism reflects what God has done in our lives already and reflects our commitment to God, our dedication to God, our reliance upon God,

---

<sup>51</sup> Heath and Dvorak, p.226-227.

A specific question is often asked, especially in the South, “When were you saved?” The questioners are anticipating a particular date and time in the life of the individual questioned, whether it is when they accepted Jesus as their Lord or when they got baptized. The answer I usually give [and Karl Barth would agree], is, “We were all saved 2000 years ago through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ!” “We are saved and our salvation will culminate in the Lord’s return!” Salvation, new birth, royal priesthood, dying and rising with Christ and being incorporated into the Body of Christ may not be able to be nailed down to the moment of baptism in water or the Spirit, (Many theologians and denominations have tried to nail it down.) though baptism does, just as in Eucharist, recall to us when Jesus was nailed to the cross, died, rose from the dead and is to come again. The repeated act of the Eucharist, baptisms themselves, the renewal of the baptismal covenant, and the many homiletic reminders of our baptism all recall the acts of God in Christ as well as in and within ourselves.

## **Additional Sundays & Seasons for Preaching Baptismal Throughout the Year**

There are Sundays, in addition to the Sundays recommended by *The Book of Common Prayer*, to preach on baptism, the baptismal vows and on baptismal themes as they fit into the Times and Seasons, rather than because they fit into a particular Sunday or into a series of consecutive Sundays, whether for a season now and then or several Sundays leading up to a Baptism. Preaching a series on baptism every Sunday of a season every few years “preaches” something loud and clear about the importance of Baptism in and of itself, plus it gives the preacher time to cover the varied aspects of baptism.

The preacher could use the themes of the season or simply take various parts of *The Service for Holy Baptism* as a way to address something different about Baptism each Sunday in that season. Preaching the renunciations one Sunday, the “I do’s” the next and the “We will!” the following Sunday, would be an opportunity to speak about commitment, stewardship and providing for the varied ministries of a church. The opening acclamation would be an opportunity to preach unity within diversity and the many gifts of the Body of Christ. The Baptismal Covenant which would include the Creed and vows would provide opportunity to preach on the call to ministry and what believing in Christ would mean for the baptismal life. The theology behind *The Prayers of the People* gives opportunity to explore the depths of Baptism, the empowering of the Holy Spirit, growth for the journey, being a part of the Body of Christ, being witnesses to the love of God, etc. The *Thanksgiving over the Water* and *Consecration of the Chrism* over the water captures the deep and varied theologies of Baptism. *Welcoming the Newly Baptized* addresses the Church, confession of the faith, and the priesthood of all believers.

Lent is a traditional time for preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil or Easter Service and could be an opportunity to preach a series on Baptism. Melinda Quivik's concept is to preach on the implications of baptism throughout Lent.<sup>52</sup> She says the readings call for it. Taking a long view, this could be done for example, every third year in the life of a parish.

It may be that in the routine life of a parish that an occasional Easter Season could be a time to unpack the implications of Baptism in our lives. There is historical precedent for this practice. "From documents such as Cyril's sermons [of Jerusalem ca. 350-387], liturgical historians suggest that in the early church, the baptismal rite preceded explanation about it."<sup>53</sup> Marion Hatchett mentions in *A Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, p. 254, "Because of the *disciplina arcani*, the discipline of secrecy, the initiates did not learn the meaning of these rites until after their participation."<sup>54</sup>

Another opportunity to preach on baptismal themes is in preaching the five baptismal vows of *The Baptismal Covenant*. Our baptismal vows are not only a set of ethics for the baptized but also a call to ministry; a spiritual guide to a life in relationship with God; and a call to live beyond ourselves. Learning and living the five baptismal vows is a challenge for many. Preaching on them is one way to not only reinforce them but to help parishioners to hear, learn, mark and inwardly digest them. Paul used the imagery of Baptism as a way to preach Christian ethics so focusing upon the five vows throughout the year would be congruent with the spirit of Paul.

---

<sup>52</sup> See Melinda Quivik, *Preaching Baptism through Lent*, Workingpreacher.org: February 6, 2012

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., *Preaching Baptism through Lent*, Workingpreacher.org: February 6, 2012

<sup>54</sup> Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1980), 254.

*Will you continue in the apostles' teaching fellowship, the breaking of the bread and the prayers?"* Sometimes the context of the season itself, rather than the readings, can call for a preaching theme. This vow is about ordinary life within the church...Sunday School, Eucharist, sharing meals, fellowship, having fun, stewardship, and the internal ministries of the Church from Altar Guild to the Vestry, etc. This first vow is about reminding the congregation that worship is where we all meet sooner or later, even if only on Christmas, Easter, weddings and funerals. This is a time to preach on stewardship and the responsibilities of all the baptized "to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray and give for the spread of the Kingdom of God. (Page 856, BCP). It is a time to preach on "Liturgy" and what the *work of the people* is all about, reminding them that not only do the priest, choir, ushers, lectors have to 'perform well' and 'work hard' but so must every parishioner as they do their best to worship God on that day. Summer season or early Fall when "God has gotten back from vacation," as Robin Williams used to say, are good seasons to preach these themes.

The 'high feast' of "Kick Off Sunday" in the fall would be a good time to preach on the first vow and stewardship of the Church ministries and use of the facilities and education. Preaching on the ongoing commitment of those who serve the church from within and why they serve, would be appropriate. The Altar Guild echoes the devotion of the women in the Gospel of Luke. The youth leaders and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew echoes St. Andrew's ministry with the youth and evangelism as only Episcopalians can do it. Christian Education is about taking Jesus' seriously enough to study His words and pray enough so we can say we know Jesus and are familiar with His words. Preaching on the choir ministry and making a joyful noise unto the Lord, is about how we pray from our hearts. Liturgy is drama that transforms and it is re-

enactment, improvisation, and listening to and responding to the Holy Spirit. All of this is about “continuing in the breaking of the bread and the prayers.

*“Will you persevere in resisting evil and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?”* Lent is a traditional time to prepare catechumens so any Sunday during the season, especially the first Sunday of Lent, would be good for preaching on the second baptismal vow. This particular Sunday always includes the temptations of Christ and the vows provide a rule of life that will help all persevere in resisting evil. Historically the season of Lent has been more focused upon individuals but this season could also be a time to examine the church community and explore any reconciliation that needs to take place or to face temptations – toward complacency, liturgical snobbery, or our inability to live the vows as a church. Richard Giles speaks of the communal opportunity:

...individuals who had been excluded from the Church’s life and worship by reason of grievous sin. This accounts for the emphasis on self-examination, fasting, penitence and spiritual discipline which have been traditionally associated with this season. A natural further development was the involvement of the whole Christian community in the process of prayerful and disciplined preparation, by way of solidarity with those to go through the rites of initiation, in what has become a kind of annual ‘refresher course’ for all Christians”<sup>55</sup>

The season of Lent could easily be a season to preach the basics of the faith or all the baptismal vows as ways to connect the entire congregation to history, theology and tradition. Each vow comes with a temptation not to keep it. “I don’t feel like going to church today!” “I do not want to sign a pledge card.” “I don’t need further education.” “What happens to poor people globally or at my doorstep does not concern me because there is really nothing I can do about it, for the poor will be with us always.” “It is the duty of the ministers to proclaim the

---

<sup>55</sup> Giles, Richard. *Times and Seasons, Creating Transforming Worship Throughout the Year*. (New York: Church Publishing, 2008), p.72.

gospel and baptize, so I do not need to be concerned with proclaiming the gospel by word.” “My deeds speak for themselves!” This could ‘relieve’ rectors of teaching an inquirer’s class, for more often than not, the entire congregation could benefit from refresher courses from time to time. Lent is still a season when many churchgoers do go the extra ‘eighth mile or so’ to learn a bit more about their faith and to practice it in a bit more disciplined manner. The preacher could divide up the three temptations Jesus faced – power, magic, and immediate satisfaction or as so many say, ‘giving them a fish instead of teaching them to fish.’ Where are we working for our spiritual food? Where are we working to serve the needy? Where are we working to proclaim resurrection and new life to others?

“*Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?*” “Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed!” “Alleluia!” Easter season is a time for reflecting on and focusing upon ways to verbalize the faith within ourselves and to others. Our current Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, is inviting us to learn to do this as a way of becoming a missional church. He is quite conscious that Episcopalians are shy about proclaiming their faith out loud and to others and he is trying to help us verbalize our faith stories to ourselves and others. The preacher could share opportunities for Episcopalians to express their faith in simple ways and share ways in which the preacher has done so.<sup>56</sup> It is a time to model telling one’s faith story as well as helping Episcopalians tap into their own stories. Some stories might be, “I have not found God yet?” “God has not found me yet!” “I have questions?” “I have never not known God in my life!” “I find God in the Eucharist!” “I know God personally and God has spoken, redeemed, saved, led me!” All of these are faith stories and Episcopalians might feel

---

<sup>56</sup>I suggest the last Sunday of Easter for they have been hearing the spread of the Gospel through the Book of Acts and now it is time to take up that mantle and that vow:

reassured to hear that. Once we have been able to verbalize our faith stories to ourselves, we might better be able to proclaim by word the Good News of Jesus Christ.

*“Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbor as yourself?”* The Magi sought God in the stars. Epiphany could be a season to focus upon seeking and serving Christ outside the church and possibly in the digital universe, providing “stars” for seekers. It is a time to provide signs and wonders that the world can see so it might be drawn to Jesus. Professor Christopher Durasingh of *Episcopal Divinity School*, suggests seeing the font as the exit of the church rather than the entrance. “Our people too often see church as an infirmary for themselves rather than an armory for ministry.” Durasingh suggests that it is not both/and but that the church should be seen primarily as an armory for training for mission.<sup>57</sup>

*Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?”* Richard Giles in giving background on the Season of Advent, and speaking of Advent in the West as ‘penitential lite’ says, “The Season conceals something of a tug of war between the church’s intentions and human inclination.”<sup>58</sup> This may well describe for the majority of Episcopal Churches the tension between saying the fifth vow and living and ‘doing’ the fifth vow. Striving for justice in our culture and for suburban Episcopal churches is risky business due to the divisive political atmosphere within our culture. How can a congregation find a social justice cause that can unite them?<sup>59</sup> How can a congregation intentionally

---

<sup>57</sup> Shumard, *Baptismal Model for Ministry*, p. 49.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Giles, *Times and Seasons, Creating Transforming Worship Throughout the Year*, (New York: Church Publishing, 2008) .26.

<sup>59</sup> Our parish has been able to agree on ways to help the working poor as one way Republicans and Democrats can agree to help those who are fishing but catching little. Our “Change the world...one diaper at a time program, is about giving a month’s supply of diapers to the working poor which helps hard workers, children and parents without enabling anyone. This program evolved out of the question, “What social justice issue can we unite around?”

encourage its membership to individually become advocates, while not only respecting the dignity of human beings outside the church, but respecting the dignity of every member's opinion in the church, including the ones with whom we might disagree? John the Baptist preaches fairness and simplicity whereas Jesus preaches radical generosity and sacrifice. John says share from surplus and Jesus says to give away essentials. This season of shopping and giving, this season of token gifts to the poor, can help contrast John and Jesus. Advent is about "Your Kingdom come on earth as in heaven" and this is a challenging season for Episcopalians to find ways to strive for justice in church and society. Advent reflects the prophets of the Old Testament in the *Magnificat* and the life and words of John the Baptist. This is a season of advocacy for the poor and getting right with God ethically and mystically. Preachers are warned to stay away from politics and money in the pulpit, yet, like money, Jesus often addresses politics directly. So much in the Gospels shout politics to Jesus' listeners, the first readers of the Gospels and to those of the Early Church. Calling Jesus Lord was an act of treason to Caesar. Advent may be a time to ask the people who or what, on a day to day basis, is lord of their life. Preachers focusing upon the fifth baptismal vow have an opportunity to preach (in fear and trembling) prophetically in that context and maybe still come away with their jobs. The most important call of the fifth vow is to understand that unless the people of God are calling on the preacher to speak for justice and peace, then the preacher may simply be a lone ranger, a voice crying in the wilderness of silence.

Finally, there are individual Sundays throughout *The Revised Common Lectionary* where the opportunity to preach on Baptism arises. It is hoped that preachers who are convinced that we need to preach baptism year-round will pay close attention to the readings appointed on any given Sunday so when the classic scriptures related to baptism come up such as Galatians 3 or

Romans 6, John 3, Galatians 3, Colossians 2, Ephesians 4, I Corinthians 12, and various readings in Acts (8, 10 & 19 for example), they may take the opportunity to preach Baptism. There will be other Sunday readings that deal with social justice, evangelism, commitment, dying and rising with Christ, what the Church is, taking care of the poor, the lost and left out, the power of the Spirit and other topics that relate to Baptism, the Baptismal Covenant and the vows.

## **Baptismal Sermons**

### **Easter, Pentecost, All Saints' Day and The Baptism of Our Lord**

*The Book of Common Prayer* recommends that Baptisms or the Renewal of Baptismal Vows be done on the Feasts of *Easter, Pentecost, All Saints' Day* and *The Baptism of Our Lord*. The following sermons are meant to stimulate sermon ideas for those four feast Days especially when there is no baptism.

The themes from these four feast days can cover most of the theological and sacramental aspects of Baptism and this is the advantage of preaching them especially when there are no baptisms. Preaching these four Sundays alone, even if no other sermons were preached on a different Sunday, would constitute preaching baptism year - round.

Sermons are written in the style in which I write to preach including grammar variations. There is more within each sermon than what is actually delivered, not only because that is the usual way I write and then give sermons, but because I have added more as potential resources for preachers.

I have included some personal illustrations for each sermon and I have also purposely included elements in each sermon that “preach to the preachers.” This is a resource for preachers so it seemed logical in writing these sermons to include a way in which to imagine preachers as part of a congregation.

## EASTER

### **“Alleluia the Lord is Risen! “Uh Oh!”**

*An Easter sermon to be preached when there are no baptisms.*

Easter is about shock and awe and fear and wonder...with just an inkling of belief in the resurrection and its implications. Easter is also about “Uh Oh!” What does this mean...for me...for you...for the Church and the World?”

Paul speaks to the meaning of Easter and especially its meaning for baptism. He would say that Easter is about dying and rising with Christ on the cross, in the grave and empty tomb. Lent *and* Easter are all about our baptism; preparation for it; entering into it; remembering it; understanding it; and being immersed in its mystery.

One aspect of Baptism that Paul envisions, experiences and writes about, is being buried in the waters of baptism with Christ and rising with Christ out of the waters to a new life, where we clothe ourselves with Christ, becoming part of the Body of Christ. The font becomes both tomb and womb. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, puts it this way as he reminds those who had already been baptized, which includes most of us in this room...

Ye were led to the Holy Pool of Baptism as Christ was carried from the cross to the Sepulcher...[Ye] descended three times into the water, and ascended again; here also hinting by a symbol at the three days burial of Christ...And at the self-same moment ye were both dying and being born; and that Water of salvation was at once your grave and your mother.”<sup>60</sup>

What does it mean? What *of* us or *in* us must die in order to be born again?

---

<sup>60</sup> Hedahl, p. 66.

I cannot answer for you. I can answer for me as a priest, pastor and preacher. It is one thing to be born again in a dramatic spiritual way and yet I have noticed in my life that new deaths and new births can happen over and over again. I noted the other day when I preached the evening of Ash Wednesday, when I was exhausted from the varied activities I participated in during the day, that I did not feel that I brought much energy to the evening sermon. I received however, many positive responses to the sermon in that it had an impact on their spiritual lives. Could it be that my exhaustion allowed my extroverted persona to “die” in order that Christ might be better preached? (Note the I Corinthians reading in the Daily Office, Year Two, I Lent, Monday where Paul speaks of not preaching himself and preaches the Gospel without overwhelming listeners with intellectual wisdom.). We preachers would do well to consider how much we preach ‘ourselves’ or entertain or impress with academic/ erudite wisdom and how much we preach Christ. Baptism reminds us that we preachers must especially be willing to let many things die within ourselves (over and over again?) in order to let Christ shine through us.

We preachers must explore answering this question (What must die?), maybe before we preach on it. Letting my defenses down allowed more space for the Holy Spirit to speak through me. So often we preachers...Okay, let me make an “I” statement here! So often” I” can see where letting things die; letting go of my agenda, my prejudices, my predispositions, my rote answers, my previous sermons’ answers or topics, has allowed God to work more directly through me, whether in preparing and/or delivering a sermon or in listening for God’s voice or listening to others’ voices. God obviously “preaches” through our natural gifts, so I am not suggesting giving up those characteristics of being a great story teller, academic excellence or charming our congregations. It is worth asking ourselves with each sermon though, “How much of this is me

and how much is God?” We believe in the incarnation and the collaborative work of humanity and the divine. We just need to *remember* to seek the Divine as we present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our own words and our own lives.

Too often, in preparing a sermon, I enter into a too familiar and too often preached piece of Scripture which sets off the responses to it I have given for years. It is so tempting to preach ‘the great wisdom’ I have learned through time (My wife will verify that, for unlike many parishioners who may not remember my sermon from a week ago, she actually remembers what I preached three years ago.). I need instead, to listen for the answer to the homiletic question my preaching Professor, Dr. Brosend is always training us to ask and I am paraphrasing, “What does the Spirit want to say to the People of God today...right now, in this time, in this place and circumstance. This includes, not only the circumstances in the world and community within which I preach and the congregation hears, but also my own changed circumstances and different or changed listeners since the last time I preached on the particular piece of scripture.

Paraphrasing beyond anything my professor meant, I may also need to ask the homiletic and personal question, “What must I let die in order for the Risen Lord to speak through me?” I find it helpful to identify, “to confess” my predispositions and previous insights, letting go of them (letting them die) and then opening myself to the Spirit asking what God wants to say.

I offer these personal examples as only one of the many things that may have to die in order for the Spirit of God to work through us. I wonder what must die in you. I can guess part of what had to die for Peter and that might lead to insight into what may have to die in us.

I believe it was his dreams for himself and his agenda for Jesus and himself that had to die.

- His agenda for Jesus being a military and political Messiah.
- His dreams of himself being a hero who would stand up for Jesus no matter what.
- His dreams of being at the right hand of Jesus as he led the forces of righteousness against the dark side of Rome.
- His putting his foot in his mouth, speaking without listening.
- His view of the Kingdom of God.

His view of himself and of Jesus had to die in order to see himself as God sees him and in order to embrace and be embraced by the risen Lord. Peter had to surrender so much in order to gain victory. It was with this emptiness of all he had held dear, that he met with the others who were feeling it too.

Imagine with me the place where the apostles gathered together, maybe in the same room they shared the intimacy of The Lord's Supper and maybe even the same room where the Holy Spirit fell with transforming power upon them at Pentecost. Imagine what they were thinking and feeling. They can barely see one another through the dense fog of guilt, shame, self-recrimination, and accusation.

“Where were you when they crucified our Lord?” John could have asked, “Where were you Peter when they nailed him to the cross?” The women could have asked, “Where were you Peter when they laid him in the tomb?” Peter could have responded, “At least I was there in the courtyard when they put Our Lord on trial.” Where were ALL of you who fled, deserting Our Lord?!”

Actually, I can imagine that Peter was not far away when they crucified our Lord. After all he had the guts to follow along in the dark into the courtyard outside where the religious authorities were questioning Jesus. I can imagine him watching from a distance, maybe on an adjoining hill, listening to the cries of agony as nails are hammered and as the cross is stood up and falls into place causing even more pain to Jesus.

Maybe he was still holding onto the slim hope that Jesus would pull it out of the bag again and that Peter's agenda would win out. Maybe, he thought the same thoughts that the bystanders verbalized, "Wait, let's see if the angels come and rescue him!" These words echoed Satan's words as he tempted Jesus to jump from the Temple and as he filled Peter's mouth with, "No Jesus! Quit talking about going to the cross and dying!" Did Peter remember Jesus scolding him, "Get behind me Satan!" Once again Peter may have been listening more to the whispers of Satan than to teachings of Jesus. I can imagine Peter holding his head in his hands and saying to himself:

"NO! NO! NO! It was not supposed to go this way. This is not the way, truth or life. I was supposed to be Jesus' right-hand man and James and John would be right behind me. John would be our PR guy and James would manage our military. Judas would be Secretary of Treasury and Matthew would record everything that happened. Andrew would be in charge of recruitment. Thomas would publish position papers. I can see Jesus raising a sword as he cries out we go into battle: "Come Follow me!"

Peter is awakened by another cry. As he opens his eyes he sees another sword in the distance, one stuck into the ground with a man hanging on it. He recognizes the voice of his Lord, "It is finished!"

It is finished. All they had lived for died on that cross. All they had hoped for died on that cross. All that the apostles had shared with each other on the road with Jesus died on Golgotha. In fact, all of Peter's dreams died with Jesus on the cross. Peter felt empty, lost in despair and grief, lost in nothingness. Maybe now he was ready for the Spirit of the living God to hover over his emptiness. Maybe now, with the deafening sounds of his agendas and dreams stilled, he was ready to hear and hear and understand.

Suddenly some ladies come rushing into that foggy room and breathlessly cry out, “They have taken our Lord!” Immediately Peter and John begin a sprint of a lifetime to the empty tomb. Imagine this broken empty man running to the tomb and imagine what he is thinking on the way. “Who did this?” “Who took the body away?” Then he slows his pace a bit and John passes him easily.

“Uh Oh! What if He is risen as he said he would do?” “What if He DID pull it out of the bag again?” “What if my lord, my deserted Lord, my denied Lord is alive?”

Peters slows to a slight jog.

“Uh! Oh!. What am I to do? I denied him, deserted him, denied everything about who he was and what he said. I cannot face Him or myself.”

*Pause*

Peter and John leave the empty tomb in shock and awe and wonder. Peter leaves it in fear and trembling. The apostles gather again in the upper room and Jesus appears to them. He looks into their eyes, into their hearts.

“Peace I leave you.” “Do not doubt but believe.” “Receive the Holy Spirit. “Who you forgive will be forgiven.” “Whoever you do not forgive, will not be forgiven.”

Can you imagine Peter not offering forgiveness to anyone once he experienced the forgiveness and peace of His Risen Lord...once his emptiness was filled by the Holy Spirit? Can you imagine Peter at every Eucharist when the words came up “On the night in which he was Betrayed... Denied...Deserted?” Of course, Peter would offer forgiveness to all who were troubled and heavy laden and needed refreshment because he received it from our Lord. He would, of course, offer the cleansing waters of forgiveness, a new life, a rebirth into God’s love and forgiveness. Should we not do the same?!

All the apostles shared this experience that bonded them for all eternity and we too are bonded with them for all eternity. Like Peter, *let us let go* of our regrets, our agendas, our hopes and fears, our hate, our need to control, our wisdom, remembering they have all been drowned in the waters of baptism. We are a new people living in a new community of faith, forgiveness and love with new hopes. Let us live lives reflecting that Truth.

*Pause*

What else must die in me and you to let God's word and God's life and God's love be spoken. Must we let die the spiritual Pablum and platitudes we utter; the political mottos; the excuses in our relationship; and all sorts of things. Maybe we begin by asking God that very question. "God what must I let go, what must die in me, in order for me to truly listen to You?" This Easter morning as we listen to the rumors of a risen Lord, what must we let die in order to be reborn; what must we take on in order to experience the Risen Lord face to face and become a new creation, maybe day after day, Sunday after Sunday?

*Pause*

**"Alleluia. Christ is Risen!"**

"Uh Oh" We have died with Christ!

"Uh Oh!" We are a new creation!

"Uh Oh!" We are born again!

"Uh Oh!" We are part of the Church, today, yesterday and tomorrow!

"Uh Oh!" Now we must bring all of that to the world!

**"The Lord is risen indeed!"**

## PENTECOST

### Descent of the Dove, Lightbulb and Fire!

The light bulb comes on at Pentecost. The Light of Christ is finally lit within the disciples of Jesus. The disciples (hopefully that includes us!) finally have something to say about Jesus that is true and they have the courage to say it. Maybe the world is ready to listen as well.

*Easter* is about the shock, awe, and wonder of experiencing the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *All Saints' Day* is about the resulting Church for all ages and *The Baptism of Our Lord* is about being baptized for a purpose, believing with a purpose, and acting with a purpose for the world. *Pentecost* is about the lightbulb of proclamation of repentance of sins and the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by word and deed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### *Pause*

I grew up in the Episcopal Church. I cannot remember missing a Sunday. I can remember being hauled out due to fainting. In fact, if an acolyte did not hit the floor, it was not a real worship service! I do not remember a single sermon. I was bored. I was there. I was oblivious to one and all.

The light bulb only came on when I dropped out of college and went to work in the mountains of North Georgia and met some guys who were full of Jesus. I can remember going to church with them and they had to read the prayers from the prayer book, but since I grew up in the church, attended an Episcopal Boarding School, was the son of an Episcopal priest, I knew the words by heart. However, they knew Jesus in their heart and I did not. I was so impressed with the joy and

peace of these guys I was working with, that I asked them one day at work, to lay their hands on me and pray for me. Riight there in the mountains they stopped work, laid their hands upon me and I prayed, “Jesus if you are real come into my life!” Absolutely nothing happened and absolutely everything happened! Being a good “frozen chosen” life-long Episcopalian, I felt no emotional or even intellectual response to their prayers. However, several months later, I could look back and see that I had the peace that passes understanding. I heard the words of Scripture for the first time and discovered that from all those years in church of listening to scripture, I knew the stories as well as any Southern Baptist. THE LGIHTBULB CAME ON! The lightbulb of insight came on. The lightbulb of Peace came on! The lightbulb of hope came on! The light bulb of Jesus Christ came on in my life and that experience has been the pilot light of my life ever since. I finally had something to share about Jesus Christ.

We say Pentecost is the birth of the Church, which if true, may mean the Incubation period was the three years of walking with Jesus and that the birth pangs were Holy Week.<sup>61</sup> My incubation time took place sitting in those pews for years, soaking in nutrients of Scripture readings and Eucharist and Baptism, like a seed in the soil. My Pentecost was the day the seed died and new life sprung up through the soil of the Church and the red clay of North Georgia.

- Pentecost is a time for us to reflect on where the lightbulbs have been or have not been lighted in our own lives and in the Churches.
- Pentecost may be the time we need to pray, “Jesus, if you are real, come into my life!”
- Pentecost is a time to reflect upon what it means to be the one holy catholic and apostolic church in light of baptism by water and fire.

---

<sup>61</sup> Jesus even makes this analogy of birth pangs in the sixteenth chapter, verses 21 & 22 of the Gospel of John in His farewell address.

- Pentecost is a time to walk through the disinfecting waters of the baptismal pool remembering that we have been forgiven of our sins and made one with Christ as children of God.
- Pentecost is about empowering the disciples of Jesus to boldly proclaim that the Kingdom of God has arrived in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.
- Pentecost is about confessing our sins, repenting and turning to Jesus as Lord.
- Pentecost is about attracting followers from around the world.
- Pentecost is about a call to the waters of baptism.

Pentecost jump starts the Acts of the apostles up through our time and beyond. It is about the Holy Spirit, the promised Advocate, Holy Comforter, Counselor, Teacher.

- The Holy Spirit is teaching us more and more about Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Spirit is leading us to maturity in Christ, personally and as churches and as the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
- Pentecost is about the Spirit of God boldly leading us where no Episcopalians have gone before...proclaiming the Gospel outside these doors, not just by deed, which Episcopalians do well, but by word, which we are challenged to do well.
- Pentecost calls us to do more than wait and dine in an upper room or a beautiful sanctuary and parish hall. We are baptized by water and the Spirit and fire for a reason and a purpose.
- Pentecost calls us to do more than talk about and remember Jesus, but to take up our cross, our calendar, our check book, our smart phones, and follow Him.

- Pentecost calls us to step out of our comfort zone and our desire to be comfortable and risk growing spiritually as individuals and as a church and like Stephen, risk being stoned for it.

We have gained much and done much through the generations but there is much more to learn and to do generation to generation. We need to be open to the insights and revelations of the Holy Spirit. ‘Creation Continues’ as Fritz Kunkel’s title to his book with the same name, implies. Our understanding of God’s love and of Holy Scripture and its implications in our lives and in our world, is ever expanding much like the ever-expanding universe and we have the opportunity through prayer, listening and studying, individually and corporately, to be empowered and led by the Holy Spirit no less than the apostles were empowered and led by the Holy Spirit on that first day of Pentecost.

We preachers rely upon the Holy Spirit every week as we [or at least ‘I’] urgently and sometimes desperately ask the Spirit to lead us and inspire us as we prepare a sermon. Understanding that we have received the Spirit at our baptism, at our Confirmation, at our moments of inspiration, at prayers in the mountains of North Georgia or in a house or sanctuary, and at moments of being baptized into the ‘lights coming on helps us live out our baptismal vows to worship God, to serve God in, to repent of our sins and to go out to seek and serve Christ in others.

We preachers may need to pray for the Holy Spirit to descend upon us, to transform us, to set us on fire. Maybe even we have to pray, “Jesus if you are real, come into my life!”

A friend of mine who is a member of the church, yet previously a Southern Baptist, asked me why we do not offer an invitation to come down and publicly accept Jesus. I started to say that it is offered with every invitation to the Lord's Table, but instead, I said, "Maybe we ought to." I'm still too frozen a chosen person to risk that in an Episcopal Church, but inviting people to kneel in prayer after a sermon and offer whatever prayer to Jesus and the Holy Spirit they want, can be done even by a lifelong Episcopalian and priest. Maybe a new movement of the Spirit might happen.

The Holy Spirit of wisdom, of insight, of light, of power, of gentleness, or intensity, of humor, of music, of contemplation, and of action is here and now.

- Come Holy Spirit and stir us up and make us your Church.
- Come Holy Spirit and comfort those who mourn, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake.<sup>62</sup>
- Come Holy Spirit and gives us the words that can transform the world.

*Let us pray: O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. AMEN!*<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Compline, BCP, p. 134.

<sup>63</sup> Ordination Priest, BCP, p. 528.

## ALL SAINTS' DAY

*We receive you into the household of God.*

We, in Baptism, are made Children of God, legal heirs with the full rights, privileges and duties of a member of the Body of Christ. Baptism is not only an entry to Holy Communion, but full initiation by water and Spirit into Christ's Body, the Church. This is a day to remember those who have gone before through the waters of baptism; the rivers of blood of martyrs; all who have been immersed, dipped, sprinkled and even anointed with spit in emergency rooms; and those who have helped make us who we are and who we will make who they are, from generation to generation. The bond which God established in baptism is indissoluble, like a family. *All Saints' Day* is when we celebrate those who have been faithful to Christ, faithful to the Church, and been lights in our personal and corporate lives. *All Saints' Day* can be a reminder that we are saints who will inspire other saints.

*WE receive you into the household of God.*

Who is *WE*? Who is the *YOU*?

- WE are all those who came before, all those in the world today and all those to come.
- WE speak for the Church militant, and triumphant, for all the Children of God.
- WE are the priesthood of all believers who welcome the newly baptized.

- WE ordained ministers, WE priests, WE pastors, sprinkle, dip, immerse, submerge the children of humanity and stand with John the Baptist and Jesus in the waters of the Jordan, as they pass through the waters becoming children of God with all the rights and privileges that go with that.

*Pause*

- We receive YOU along with the good, the bad the ugly and all who have gone before and who will come after you.
- We receive YOU who know what you are doing and YOU who don't have a clue.
- We receive YOU who are just going through the motions and YOU who see this as part of your devotions.
- We receive YOU who know God, who do not know God, and all who are known by God.
- We receive YOU in your sin, your questions, your imaginations, your hopes and your fears.

*Pause*

Having grown up as an army brat always moving around the country, I never felt I had a hometown. I never felt I belonged. I was always the new kid in town and in school because we always moved during the summers. I find myself jealous of those who know where they grew up and where they came from and more often than not, I still am tempted to feel like an outsider. They are the ones who can talk about the old Federal Building before it was an old Sears store and before it was something else.

The one constant in my life though, besides my family, was The Episcopal Church. Wherever we traveled and moved, we always attended The Episcopal Church. I call it my hometown. I can talk about the 1928 Prayer Book and the good old days when acolytes fainted at every service. I can talk about how great the Rejoice Mass was and I can sing it for you if you like? No? Well I can also talk about how much I like the “new” BCP.

The Episcopal Church has received me wherever I lived, whenever I attended and whatever I did. There were times I was going through the motions of devotion; times when I was seeking true devotion; times when I was devoted; and times when I looked forward to church because I would see girls; and times when I was in despair, in joy, or in wonder.

There are times now when I am celebrating Eucharist; administering communion, preaching or baptizing, when I feel caught up in the Spirit of God and moved by love. There are other times when I am doing all the same and thinking of other things totally unrelated to God or worship, such as what errands I have to run that day or noticing that something is out of place on the altar. Reality is that both can happen in the same service. One way or the other, I could say that in some ways, the Episcopal Church, like God, and like a good parent, has always been there for me (and you!).

What a wonderful calling for our church which is known for being an inclusive one. We accept you regardless of your beliefs, lifestyles, politics, education, social standing, abilities, what you have done and what you will do, and you name it! That is one of the cool things about baptizing infants. We call them blessed, good and cleansed, our brother and sister, long before we know

how they will ‘turn out.’ May we continue to receive all sorts and conditions of people and may we continue to be the place where all are welcomed.

I often sense that as the Eucharist is being celebrated, it is eternally being celebrated and time merges with time so that the present is the future and the future is the past and the past is the present. Jesus and all His disciples are celebrating Eucharist with us right now. We all have ‘One Common Home.’ Indeed, as a priest, I experience myself standing with priests, pastors, and ministers who have gone before, are standing at the altars today and will stand at altars tomorrow. I am not alone in this perception or experience. Listen to this comment from *The New Interpreter’s Bible*:

According to 1 John, the Church lives in eschatological time –  
a fluid chronology, calibrated by God,  
that embraces all that has been and will be.  
Time present and time past,  
Are both perhaps present in our future  
And time future contained in time past.<sup>64</sup>

I have the same experience at many baptisms where time merges with time and we stand within eternity as we baptize God’s heirs into the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. The font is where we meet eternity. We have come home where we are reminded of eternal life that Jesus’ promised us. We are reminded that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever and reminded in Paul’s words in Romans, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God!”

*We receive in you into the household of faith!*

---

<sup>64</sup> IB XII (I John, p. 410).

Sometimes I experience baptisms and Eucharist as doorways, or in modern terms and for the younger generation, portals, WORM holes,” wardrobes”<sup>65</sup> into all times and places, into eternity. Not only has God knit together this group of the elect but God has knit together His ‘semi-complete’ Body, for God needs, wants, calls, pursues all people and all creation to His side and there is yet time and room for more.

The same water we sprinkle candidates and will splash you with today is the same water from the river Jordan (Yes, a parishioner brought some back with her from the Holy Land!) where Jesus was baptized by John the baptizer and yet the same water with which Ananias baptized Paul; the same water where Philip baptized the Ethiopian; the same water where 3000 were baptized on Pentecost; the same water Peter used to baptize Cornelius and his entire household; the same water that was the blood of the martyrs that washed their robes white as a baptismal gown; and the waters that cleanse you, drown you, renew you, and birth you.

*We receive in you into the household of faith!*

- We stand with saints, martyrs, thieves, prostitutes, kings and queens, prisoners, prophets, priests, bookkeepers, doctors, lawyers, mine workers, oil riggers, chief executive officers and police officers.
- We stand with single parents, divorced and married, gay and straight, all genders, politicians and citizens, those at tea or at coffeeshops.

---

<sup>65</sup> From C. S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in the Narnia series.

- We stand with those who inspire us to love God more, whether because they did or they did not.
- We stand with those pure of heart, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the persecuted, those who grieve, those in prison, those who are simply poor or poor of spirit and those who simply thirsty or thirst after righteousness.
- We stand with the hungry, the homeless, those without healthcare, and those struggling to make ends meet.
- We stand with those who struggle to love in the midst of violence; those who struggle to forgive in the midst of great pain; and with those who struggle to have hope when they live in despair.
- We stand with the riotous, the couch potato, the righteous, the unrighteous, those who hate, those who love, those who hurt and those who are hurt...with all God's children.

*We receive in you into the household of faith!*

Jesus and all saints are examples and inspirations and guides for us. Their lives inspire us to do better. Their life and lifestyle provide pathways to a closer walk with God. All saints of the past, present and future have been, are and will be mixed bags and many have, are and will struggle with the dark night of the soul. Some previous saints lived lives of love; some of bravery; some of leadership; some of sacrifice; some for the poor and left out; some for the rich and well connected; some for the uneducated; some for the educated elite. Some lived lives of cowardice, anxiety, stress, ambivalent faith, as church goers and those who leave church, as criminals, as community organizers, as protestors, as Republicans, as Democrats, as Liberals, as conservatives, as independents.

*Pause*

I just hung up the phone (That is an ancient expression.) with a saint who had a major part to play in my becoming a Christian who had the Peace and joy that passes understanding. He and his friends exuded such a peace and joy that I wanted what they had and asked them to lay their hands on me as I and they prayed, “Lord if you are real come into my life for I want the peace and joy I see in my friends.” I have never been the same since then!

I am who I am today because of those saints.

Who are you today because of what saints?

Who will be who they become because you are a saint?

Who will be received into the household of faith because of how you live?

*We receive you into the household of faith.*

We welcome the baptized into this mess and blessedness.

- Jump in! The waters will kill you and save you.
- Jump in! The waters will burn like fire as you are cleansed from sin.
- Jump in! The waters will set you on fire for God as you are anointed with the Holy Spirit.
- We receive you into the many mansions Jesus has prepared for you.
- We receive you into the blood of martyrs and the clothing of saints.
- WE here and now, along with all the saints of God, we who have been and we who will be, in baptism, receive you into the Household of Faith.

## BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

*“Everyone has got to serve somebody!”*

*Who then shall we serve? How then shall we serve?*

Bob Dylan’s classic lyrics written after he became a Christian, echo throughout the story of Jesus’ baptism and temptations and within our own lives: “You’ve got to serve somebody!” “Who or what then shall we serve and how?” We can serve God or the Devil, ourselves, our families, our businesses, evil, good, our own desires, God’s own desires, others’ desires, etc.

Jesus struggled with these choices immediately after his baptism, at least as reported in the synoptic Gospels. Matthew and Luke spell out some of the temptations that Jesus struggled with in a dialogue with Satan. Jesus was reinforcing a decision to answer God’s call on His life.

- Jesus is tempted to serve as a bread giver, not as the Bread of life.
- Jesus is tempted to serve as a magician, not as a physician.
- Jesus is tempted to exert power by serving himself and Satan rather than offering His life for the world to serve all humanity and God.
- Jesus is tempted to serve as a son of the devil rather than as the Son of God.

“If you are the son of God, then...” echoes the voice of the serpent in the Garden of Eden in terms of the attempt to put doubt in the mind of Eve. Jesus faced these doubts and temptations over and over again throughout his Ministry for Scripture records the following:

- Even at the cross, where he could hear the echo of Satan’s voice in the voices of the bystanders, “IF you are the son of God, call upon the angels and have them bring you down from the cross!”
- Even in the voice of one of the prisoners on the cross, “IF you are the son of God, free yourself and us.”
- Even in the voices of the religious authorities, “Show us a sign.”
- Even in the voice of the Samaritan woman, “Give us this water!”
- Even in the voice of those asking, “Give us that bread.”
- Even in the voice of Peter, “Quit talking about going to the cross Jesus!” ( Jesus actually responds, “Get behind me Satan!”).

*Pause*

I can remember a particular time in my life when I was struggling with what God wanted me to do. I actually moved into a tent with my dogs for an entire summer in the mountains of North Georgia (I would like to say I lived a spartan life, but my best buddy, Sam Buice, who lived in a house about a half mile away is always reminding me that not only did I have my brass bed and dresser in the large VW camper tent, but that I came up to their house for coffee almost every morning, met them in Dahlonega for lunch or dinner many times and that I still spent time going back and forth to Atlanta to manage my business.). Each morning, however, (Okay...most mornings!) I would meditate in the woods and ask God, “What do you want me to do?” I heard no answer for almost the entire summer.

Now I must confess that despite my asking God what God wanted me to do, I was not thinking on how to serve God, but how whatever God chose for me would give me the most fulfillment. I imagine the disciples of Jesus may have had the same self-centered reasons for leaving their nets and families in order to answer Jesus' call to follow him.

I have heard clearly the voice of God within my heart, mind and soul, only a few times in my life and I did hear God's voice near the end of that summer. I heard God say to me, "Jim, I don't care what you do! You decide what YOU want to do and I will be with you always!"

Did that help me decide? I am not sure. Did I decide? Yes! I had been contemplating three possible careers: priest, mountain man or therapist. Based upon my personal needs for morning coffee, the creature comforts of home and my extroverted need to be around people, I ruled out being a mountain man! I decided I wanted to be a priest. I left the wilderness (of coffee, people, nature, comfortable bed...and by the way, did I mention my rocking chair?) of North Georgia and returned to Atlanta to pursue ordination to the priesthood.

I, unlike Jesus then and now, was and am more often concerned about personal fulfillment than offering myself in service to God, though there are those wonderful moments when I am willing to lay down my personal needs in order to answer God's call, whether that be a phone call to the hospital or a voice within my heart, mind and soul. Jesus, on the other hand, came away from the wilderness determined and willing to obey the Father at every point in His life...and it led him to daily prayer and to the cross.

You will notice that God did not tell Jesus what to do at His baptism or in the wilderness (Okay maybe I am comparing myself to Jesus and that is a blessed and dangerous thing to do!), yet Jesus offered His life to the Father for the World every moment even as He faced temptations all the way there.

So much of what happened with Jesus in baptism, happens with us in baptism.

- The Holy Spirit alighted upon Jesus in the form of a dove. We, the baptized, have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. God will be with us always.
- Jesus is tempted by Satan to serve him rather than God. Temptation is intimately connected to Baptism.
  - We baptized deal with temptations to serve ourselves rather than God.
  - We baptized are tempted to settle for ordinary life rather than an extraordinary and sacrificial life.
  - We baptized, are tempted to be baptized and check it off our bucket list rather than fill the buckets of others.
- Jesus begins his ministry immediately after his baptism. Ministry in the Kingdom of God is intimately connected to Baptism. The five baptismal vows recited throughout our lives, call the baptized to ministry.
- Jesus is declared the Son of God at his baptism. Being made a child of God, an heir to the Kingdom of God is intimately connected to our Baptism.

Our connection to Jesus' own baptism reminds us that we are children of God, heirs to the Kingdom of God with all rights, privileges and duties that come with that responsibility. The rights and privileges include reception of the Holy Spirit, being redeemed and being empowered for ministry. We in fact will find ourselves, our fulfillment, our very lives in offering ourselves in service to God, in whose service is perfect freedom! We spell out that service in the duties of the baptismal vows.

- Our duties include continuing in the apostles teaching and fellowship, the breaking of the bread and the prayers...showing up at Church with open minds and hearts, being open to formation and transformation.
- Our duties include resisting evil and repenting when we fall into temptation.
  - This includes regular confession, examining ourselves, and changing our ways as needed.
  - Those responsibilities include not only resisting temptation, but confessing when we fall into sin.
  - Those responsibilities mean confessing how often we choose to serve and build our own kingdoms rather than serve and build God's Kingdom. Jesus calls us to the path less traveled, the way of the cross and some of us may take the path of least resistance, the way of success, power, addiction, consumption, judgement, self-centeredness and denial.
- Our duties include proclaiming by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. We proclaim that news by living lives of praise and thanksgiving and sacrifice everywhere we live and move and have our being. We proclaim by both what we do and

do not do, and what we say and do not say, including on social media and to our friends and family.

- Our duties include seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves. These are active verbs and are about actively seeking Christ and seeking to serve all people.
- Our duties include striving for justice and peace among all people and respecting the dignity of every human being. That means having civil discourse around politics and other hot topics. It means addressing injustice wherever we encounter it, whether on the job, in school, IN CHURCH, on social networks, and in politics.

The Baptism of Jesus calls us as Children of God to take up our cross and follow God. We as heirs to the kingdom and to the cross, are called to seek God's kingdom first in our lives.

Striving to fulfill the baptismal vows will help keep our eyes and hearts seeking the Kingdom. Remembering or simply understanding ourselves as a child of God may help us to make great efforts in living in the Kingdom of God and in the World.

Reality is that most of us, including myself, are wrapped up more in our own personal kingdoms, whether they be family, work, school or something else. We "professional ministers" can get so wrapped up in "church work" and protecting our boundaries and our careers, as we are taught to do in seminary, that we may forget to be about God's work. We priests have ordination vows in addition to our baptismal vows. Are we keeping them? We vow to study scripture over and above that needed to do our jobs; to seek God's kingdom rather than build our own; to join the councils of the church rather than hide our gift within our own congregations; to minister to poor

and rich, active and occasional parishioners; and to persevere in prayer, both public and private. The Baptismal vows remind all of us to seek God's kingdom first.

God sometimes gets our leftovers at best...leftovers of time, money, energy, vision and passion. The vows said when we renew our vows, '*are not necessarily a road map for ministry but more a thermometer to help us get a sense of our baptismal spiritual health.*' They also remind us to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Kingdom and make straight the narrow path, the way of Jesus.

Baptisms or renewing our vows on *The Feast of the Baptism of our Lord*, reminds those of us who were baptized as infants or before the 'age of reason,' to remember that baptism is not simply a membership ritual, but a launching pad for ministry in and through the Church. Like Jesus who had not yet begun His ministry or "proven" himself, we declare infants at baptism as beloved children of God. Not only do we vow to support them in their life in Christ, but we reaffirm in the baptismal vows, the calling within Baptism to ministry in the world. Jesus during his baptism received the Holy Spirit, not to simply sit in the waters and bask in His Father's approval, but to be driven by that same Holy Spirit into the wilderness and back into the 'world' where he continued to wrestle with how He would serve and how He would minister, how he would live and how He would die.

Every baptism and/or renewal of our vows in this church can remind us to serve the world. How then shall you and I serve? Is there a ministry within this church you want to join? Is there a ministry within your heart that we can support? Is there a ministry in the world that is calling

you? Baptisms are opportunities for you and me to ask the Holy Spirit to lead us not into temptation but into ministry.

Come on and jump in with both feet, with all your heart, mind, soul, might and body. Get not only your feet wet, but yourselves, your souls and bodies. Ask God for what you need to do God's work and we will transform the world!

AMEN!

## Conclusion

Preaching Baptism regularly throughout the year and the years, through a season and the seasons, from generation to generation, is primarily for the life of the entire congregation throughout its lifelong spiritual journey as a corporate group and as individuals. Neither a strong Catechumenate program nor classes nor a sermon at a baptism, nor renewing the baptismal vows on the Sundays recommended for baptism, will fulfill the need for congregational transformation through baptismal formation. Preaching year round and seasonally on baptism, in addition to preaching on the rite and The Baptismal Covenant with vows, can and will make a significant difference in the baptismal life of the congregation.

Preaching baptism year- round adds to the power of the sacrament itself which has its own authority, integrity and place. Preaching baptism year-round reinforces the Sundays appointed in *The Book of Common Prayer* for renewing baptismal vows, for each of these Sundays makes up a unique piece of the tapestry of baptismal theology and experience. Preaching baptism year-round in the majority of Episcopal Churches with a small *Average Sunday Attendance* and thus with few baptisms, gives the opportunity to expand upon baptismal meanings and values in ways that would never happen if sermons on baptism were only preached when there was to be a baptism. Preaching baptism on the appointed Sundays in *The Book of Common Prayer* would especially be important for these small churches. Preaching the vows year-round reinforces the ethical life of a Christian, offering context for our intended behaviors.

Preaching baptism well beyond the normal recommended Sundays...

- Preaches a lifelong journey of dying and rising with Christ;
- Preaches letting go of the desires of this world;

- Preaches living out the priesthood of all believers;
- Preaches being empowered by the Holy Spirit for mission and ministry;
- Preaches renouncing evil and temptation in all its forms;
- Preaches repenting and *turning and returning* to the Lord over and over again;
- Preaches the history of baptism;
- Preaches new birth;
- Preaches the priesthood of all believers;
- Preaches being incorporated in to the one holy catholic and apostolic church with all rights, privileges and responsibilities;
- Preaches baptism by water, word, fire and Spirit;
- Preaches the power of the Holy Spirit;
- Preaches works, faith, and beliefs;
- Preaches continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship;
- Preaches the breaking of bread and the prayers;
- Preaches continuously striving for peace and justice;
- Preaches seeking and serving others;
- Preaches respecting the dignity of every human being;
- Preaches learning to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- Preaches continued reminders of our baptism and that we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ own forever!
- Preaches Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and tomorrow;

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, J. Neil, ed. *With Ever Joyful Hearts: Essays on Liturgy and Music Honoring Marion C. Hatchett*. New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 1999.
- Alexander, J. Neil. *Celebrating Liturgical Time*. New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 2014.
- Allen, O. Wesley Jr. *Preaching and Reading the Lectionary: A Three Dimensional Approach to the Liturgical Year*. Danvers, Massachusetts: Chalice Press, 2007.
- Barth, Karl. *The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism*. Bloomsberry Street, London: S C M Press, 1956.
- Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Printing, Faith and Order Paper No. 111*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2007.
- The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacrament and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.
- Brownson, J. V. *The Promise of Baptism, An Introduction to Baptism in Scripture and the Reformed Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007.
- Bray, Gerald, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament, Vol VII, 1-2 Corinthians*. Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Bray, Gerald, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Vol VI, Romans*. Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Bray, Gerald, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament, Vol VIII, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Brockopp, Daniel C., Brian L. Heige and David G. Truemper, ed. *Institute of Liturgical Studies Occasional Papers*. Valparaiso, Indiana: Institute of Liturgical Studies, 1981.
- Brosend, William. *The Preaching of Jesus: Gospel Proclamation, Now and Then*. Louisville, KY: Westminster: John Knox Press, 2010.
- Brownson, James V. *The Promise of Baptism, An Introduction to Baptism in Scripture and the Reformed Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William E. Eerdmans, 2007.
- Buttrick, David. *Homiletic, Moves and Structures*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

- Childers, Jana. *Performing the Word, Preaching as Theatre*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- “Common Declaration by Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby,” Episcopal News Service, *episcopaldigitalnetwork.com*, October 5, 2016, accessed October 5, 2016.
- Craddock, Fred B. *As One Without Authority*. St. Louis Missouri: Chalice Press. 2001.
- Craddock, Fred B. *Overhearing the Gospel*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2002.
- Craddock, Fred B. *Preaching*, Nashville: Abington Press, 1985.
- Eastman, Theodore. *The Baptizing Community*. New York: Morehouse Publishing, 1990.
- Edwards, Dan. *Study Guide to Prayer Book Spirituality*. New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990.
- Giles, Richard. *Times and Seasons, Creating Transforming Worship Throughout the Year*. New York: Church Publishing, 2008.
- Graves, Mike. *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the literary Forms of the New Testament*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997.
- Hatchett, Marion J. *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1980.
- Heath, Gordon L. & James Dvorak, eds. *Baptism, Historical, Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*. Eugene, Oregon: PICKWICK publications, 2009.
- Hedahl, Susan K. *Proclamation and Celebration, Preaching on Christmas, Easter and Other Festivals*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.
- Hilkert, Mary Catherine. *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1997.
- Johnson, Maxwell E. *The Rites of Christian Initiation*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999.
- Johnson, Maxwell, ed., *Sacraments and Worship, the Sources of Christian Theology*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- Johnson, Maxwell E. & Aidan Kavanagh, ed. *Living Water, Sealing Spirit. Pueblo: Pueblo Books*. 1995.

- Johnson, Trygve David. *The Preacher as Liturgical Artist, Metaphor, Identity and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Shape of Baptism, The Rite of Initiation*. Liturgical Press, 1978.
- Long, Thomas G. *Preaching from Memory to Hope*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- Meyers, Ruth & Mitchell, Leonel. *Praying Shapes Believing, A Theological Commentary on The Book of Common Prayer*. New York: Seabury Press, 2016.
- Meyers, Ruth, ed. *Baptism and Ministry*. New York: The Church Hymnal Company, 1994.
- Meyers, Ruth. *Continuing the Reformation, Revisioning Baptism in the Episcopal Church*. New York: Church Publishing, 1990.
- Mitchell, Leonel. *Praying Shapes Believing, A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer*. Chicago: Winston Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Planning the Church Year*. Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A draft memoir by Lee Mitchell* emailed to the author, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Lent, Holy Week, Easter and the Great Fifty Days: A Ceremonial Guide*. Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1996.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume X*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume XI*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume XII*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume X*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Nichols, Bridgett. *Liturgical Hermeneutics: Interpreting Liturgical Rites in Performance*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996.
- Quivik, Melinda. *Preaching Baptism through Lent*. Workingpreacher.org: February 6, 2012.
- The Revised Common Lectionary, Episcopal Edition, New Revised Standard, 3 Year Cycle*. Wichita: St. Mark's Press, 1992.
- Shumard, James Bradley. *A Baptismal Model for Ministry in the Episcopal Church*,

- Connecting Liturgy, Baptism and Ministry year-round in ways which are congruent with The Book of Common Prayer in Order to remind the Baptized of their Baptismal Ministry.* Cambridge: Episcopal Divinity School, 2010.
- Spinks, Bryan. *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism, From Luther to Contemporary Practices.* Yale University, Ashgate, 2006.
- Stevenson, Peter K. & Wright, Stephen I. *Preaching the Atonement,* Louisville. Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.
- Stevenson, Peter K. & Stephen I Wright. *Preaching the Incarnation.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.
- Stevick, Daniel B. *By Water and the Word, The Scriptures of Baptism.* New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 1997.
- Stevick, Daniel B. *Baptismal Moment; Baptismal Meaning.* New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1987.
- Stookey, Laurence. *Baptism, Christ's Art in the Church.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982.
- Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. *The Whispered Word, The Theology of Preaching.* St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1999.
- Taylor, Nicholas. *Paul on Baptism: The Theology, Mission and Ministry in Context.* London, UK: SCM Press, 2016.
- Tisdale, Leonora Tubbs. *Prophetic Preaching, A Pastoral Approach.* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertation.:* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Turrell, James. *Celebrating the Rites of Initiation: A Practical Ceremonial Guide.* New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 2013.
- Wainwright, Geoffrey and Karen Westerfield Tucker, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Worship.* New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006.
- Wallace, James A. *Preaching to the Hungers of the Heart: The Homily on the Feast and Within the Rite.* Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002.
- Watkins, Clare. *Living Baptism, Called Out of the Ordinary.* London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 2006.
- Weil, Louis. *Christian Initiation: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary on the Proposed Rites.* Alexandria, Virginia: Associated Parishes, Inc., 1991.

Willimon, William. *Interpretation Series, Acts*. Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988.

Willimon, William. *Remember Who You Are, Baptism, a Model for Christian Life*. Nashville: The Upper Room, 1980.

Willimon, William H. *Proclamation and Theology*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2005.

Williams, Rowan. *Being Christian, Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.

Witherington, Ben III. *Troubled Waters, The Real New Testament Theology of Baptism*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007.

Wood, Susan. *Ecumenical Dimensions of the Doctrine of Baptism*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009.

World Council of Churches. *Lima Text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. 1982.

Yates, Arthur S. *Why Baptize Infants? A study of the Biblical, Traditional and Theological Evidence*. Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1993.





