

Celebrating the Baptism of an Infant

dorothy henderson
education for the faith, ministry with
children and youth
ext 271
dhenders@presbyterian.ca

Baptism assures us that we belong to God. (*Living Faith 7.6.5*) As Martin Luther pointed out, it is through baptism that we are first received into the Christian community.

Add some of these activities to the baptism of the infants in your congregation in order to make baptism an event that people remember forever.

- In the weeks prior to the baptism, inform the congregation that the baptism will occur. This allows people to wait in hopeful anticipation. People may also be encouraged to bring a card or make a small gift.
- If there are older children in the family, have them draw a picture of baptism and use that as a bulletin cover.
- Include friends and relatives in the planning of the baptismal ceremony. Consider this an extended-family event.
- If you have not done so, prepare and distribute a brochure or pamphlet that explains baptism from a Presbyterian perspective. (Many people are superstitious or confused about the meaning of baptism.)
- Prepare a gift for the infant. This might include a gift box (a faith chest) for storing small baptismal treasures or a Bible verse which can be presented on the anniversary of each baptism. Many religious stores carry baptismal candles which can be burned on the baptismal anniversary. A Bible story book is also an appropriate gift. A shell reminds us of God's cleansing action in baptism.
- Have the other boys and girls in the congregation welcome their new brother or sister in Christ.
- Invite families to write a baptismal prayer for their child, or suggest to the minister things they wish for their child which might be included in the prayer.
- Encourage parents to celebrate, annually, the baptism of their child just as they would celebrate a birthday—have a family party with ice cream and cake, add something to the faith box, light the baptismal candle, share baptismal stories.
- After the worship, set up a photographer's corner. Encourage both family and church members to have their picture taken with the child. This is a good time for elders to connect with a newly baptized baby.
- Follow up after the baptism with cards and newsletters. A good resource is *Splash* which offers an encouraging newsletter to parents each month until the age of three. (Available from *The Book Room*, 800-619-7301)

