

Session One

The Experience of Baptism

Objectives

1. Hear and retell the story of Jesus' baptism.
2. Discuss what is essential to baptism.
3. Learn about other participants' stories of baptism.

Materials

1. *Sing a New Song* hymnal
2. The movie clip *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*
3. Chart paper, markers, pens, pencils
4. Props for the story of Jesus' baptism
5. Copies of the activity sheet, *Sharing My Story of Baptism* (page 6)

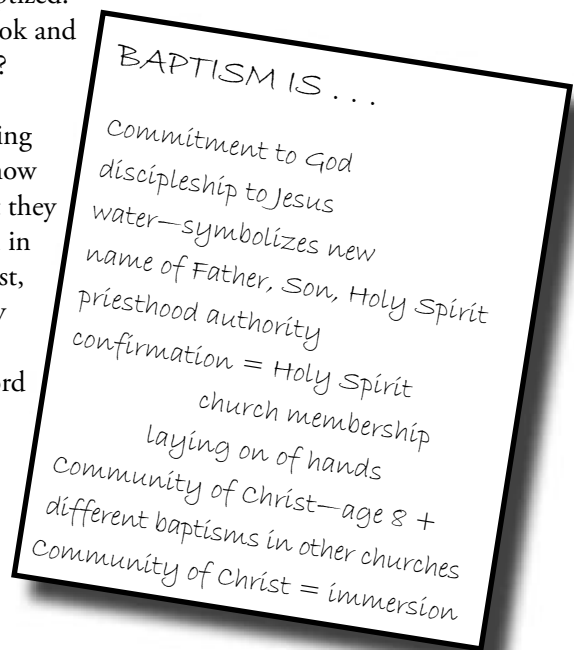
NOTE:

The use of an icebreaker or team-building activity may be helpful before this first session, especially if the group contains new faces. Suggestions are provided at the end of Session One.

Gathering

- Sing together NS 22, "Jesus."
- Offer a prayer asking to feel God's presence as you listen to stories of baptism.
- Show the movie clip from *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town - Zachary's Baptism* (available online at http://www.wingclips.com/cart.php?target=product&product_id=16524&substring=zachary). Toby and Cody make arrangements so that Zachary finally can get baptized.
- Being inclusive and interactive, discuss the following questions: What was happening in that clip? What did you see and hear? How many of you have been baptized? Did your baptism look and sound like Zachary's?
- Lead them into sharing what they already know about baptism, what they know about baptism in Community of Christ, and finally what they find most important about baptism. Record their responses on chart paper. (see sample)

FAMILIES:
EVEN YOUNG
CHILDREN CAN LEARN
TO SING THE ONE-LINE
REFRAIN.



TRANSITION QUESTION

Where does the Community of Christ model of baptism come from?

Gleaning

TELL THE STORY

Tell the story of the baptism of Jesus. (One version included) Reading with good expression and the use of props makes the story come alive and memorable. Let participants know they will be asked to retell the story, so they need to use active listening.

RETELL IT

After telling the story, invite the group to participate in the retelling by saying, “To help us really enter this story, we are going to retell the events in the order they happened while it is still fresh in your mind. You will be surprised at how much you remember! What happened first in the story?” The retelling does not need to be exact; it should be a quick overview, catching key events and dialogue in order. If someone jumps ahead in the story, affirm them and ask them to hold that thought while you ask the group what happened before that. If the group misses something, you may want to fill it in. This may seem a bit redundant, but it is an excellent exercise to help them think deeply about the story and gain new perspectives. (*adapted from Shaped by the Story by Michael Novelli, 2008*)

FAMILY ALTERNATIVE

HAVE FAMILY MEMBERS ACT OUT THE STORY.

TALK ABOUT THE STORY

- Ask group members to close their eyes and put themselves in the scene. Who or where are they in the story? For example: in the crowd, the dove floating down, John the Baptist.
- What do we learn about John from this scene?
- Why do you think people came to be baptized by John?
- What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?

REMEMBER YOUR STORY OF BAPTISM

Personal stories of baptism are important to remember and share. Give each participant a copy of the activity sheet, *Sharing My Story of Baptism* (page 6). Allow time to reflect on and answer the guiding questions. If some individuals have not been baptized or don't remember their baptism, invite them to partner with someone else. They may act as recorders who write down their partners' thoughts or share what they know about baptism.

FAMILY ALTERNATIVE

CHILDREN MAY DRAW PICTURES.

SHARE YOUR STORY OF BAPTISM

In a spirit of worship, invite individuals to share their stories with the group. Be sensitive to those who may not wish to share.

OPTIONAL WATER ACTIVITY

Visit a baptismal font, lake, or pool where baptisms occur. How is the setting different from where Jesus was baptized? How is it the same? Wash hands in a pan of water, sink, or outdoor faucet. Reflect on how the water feels, how we use it, and the purposes it serves for our bodies and our world. (For example, we drink it, wash in it, cook with it; without it we cannot live more than a few days; water shapes the earth; the human body and earth itself are 70 percent or more water.)

Going

Maintaining the spirit of the moment, read the following passage, which provides closure to this experience:

As the Spirit called us to the baptismal font
Now let it send us out as
People who have been forgiven,
Who have felt divine grace,
And are ready to serve a hungry world.

—Lu Mountenay

THE STORY OF JESUS' BAPTISM

Adapted from Matthew 3, 4; Mark 1;
Luke 3, 4; John 1 NRSV
from www.echothestory.com

God sent a messenger named John to tell people to get ready because the Messiah was coming. John was a distant cousin of Jesus, born just six months before him. He was a rugged man who lived in the wilderness, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore clothes made of camel hair.

John boldly challenged the Jews, “Don't just say that you love God—prove it with your life.

“Turn from your sins and turn to God!”

He became known as John the Baptizer as he lowered those who had confessed their sins into the Jordan River. Baptism was a symbol of being washed clean from your sins and choosing a new way of living.

When Jewish leaders asked John if he was the Messiah, he responded, “No! But someone is coming soon who is far greater than me—I'm not worthy to untie his sandals or even to be his slave.

“You see... I baptize with water, but he will baptize with God's Spirit!”

Soon after that Jesus came to be baptized. When John saw him he said, “I'm the one who needs to be baptized by you.” But Jesus insisted, so John baptized him in front of the crowds. When Jesus came out of the water, God's Spirit came down from the sky—it looked like a dove floating down, and it rested on him. Then a voice from heaven said, “You are my son who I love—you bring me great joy!”

Sharing My Story of Baptism

What did you do to prepare for baptism, and who helped?

Where were you baptized, and how old were you?

Who baptized you, and how was that person chosen?

How did you feel when you felt the water?

What is your strongest memory of that day?

What is the most important thing baptism has given you?

*Suggested Team-Building Activities

Concentration

Part of working together entails how well we pay attention to each other and our surroundings. To practice concentrating, the following activity is suggested:

Gather about 20 objects and put them on a tray. When the group is ready to play, uncover the tray. Give everyone two minutes to memorize what is on the tray. Then take it away and pass out paper and pencils. Individuals will have five minutes to write everything they can remember that was on the tray. After that bring the tray back so the members can see how accurate they were.

The Story of My Life

Provide the handout, *The Story of My Life*. Ask group members to answer the questions. When they finish, allow all to share their answers.

The Story of My Life

1. My favorite TV program when I was in grade school was/is...
2. My best subject in grade school was/is...
3. The chore I didn't/don't like was/is...
4. My favorite room in the house was/is...
5. While I was in grade school, the fun thing we did/do as a family was/is...
6. The person who helped/helps me with my homework was/is...
7. The first thing I remember wanting to be when I grew/grow up was/is...
8. My hero at age 7 was/is...
9. My favorite aunt or uncle was/is...
10. My mom's favorite food was/is...