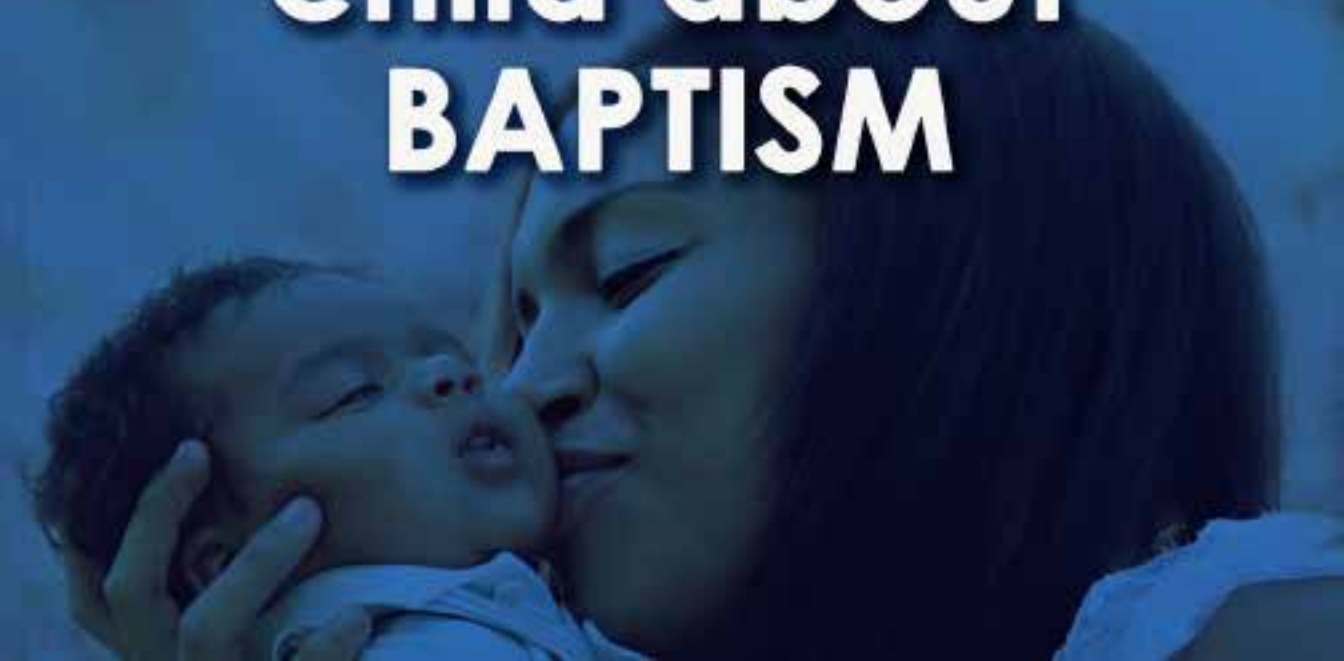


**What every
Parent should
know and
teach their
child about
BAPTISM**



Introduction

The Church understands that Christians are called to engage in lifelong learning, especially of God and Christ as revealed in Scripture, by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the renewal of Baptismal vows and the Confirmation liturgies we make a commitment to continue faith formation using the word of God, the services of the church, sharing in fellowship and through prayer. Our response to the question: “Will you continue in the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers?” is a resounding “I Will”. We as individuals make this commitment.



Our education as Christians must utilize methods that focus on people, not facts to assist believers in achieving the goal of Christlikeness. Head knowledge (cognitive awareness) often remains in the head, affecting little or no change in a person’s behavior. As Richards says, “We must begin to raise the question of whether we are communicating life or isolated beliefs. This personal, relationship-oriented context transfers more effectively in a non-formal learning approach.¹ Non-formal learning settings are shared life settings in which ideas, beliefs, and feelings are communicated.

Home Is At The Heart Of Christian Learning

The interpersonal relationships necessary for the transmission of faith are most readily available in the home. One would therefore expect that most Christian education would occur in the home however this is not the case. Christian parents often feel inadequate to teach faith to their children in a society where experts and specialists abound. Many parents have relinquished their teaching role to others who they think are better qualified for the task, without realizing that this is often not the case.²

There is importance to God using the analogy of the family to describe his relationship with humanity. It represents the place where love and growth ought to abound. Additionally, it refers to learning through relationship rather than from formal lessons. Through scripture, we learn that God is our Father and we have become joint-heirs with Jesus. However, Kay Llovio states “God has not labeled Himself our Sunday School Teacher, but our Father.”³ God wishes to be in relationship with humanity, rather than to be our tutor.

1 Richards, A Theology of Christian Education, 66.

2 Llovio, 21.

3 Llovio, 20.

How can Parents Share Faith?⁴

1. Of utmost importance in nurture is that parents know what they believe and live their beliefs to the fullest.

2. All points of the person can be touched by sharing life with them; and the best opportunity to share lives is in the home. The amount of time spent together should be quality time with a conscious effort to transmit positive thoughts and actions that are consistent with our beliefs in God's Word.

3. Parents need to communicate their love in a natural manner; contrived situations will not accomplish the purpose.

4. A love for the Word of God must be reflected in the parents' behavior for the child to model. Parents must both read and live by the Word of God, unlike what was demonstrated by those who listened to the prophet Ezekiel but did not do as he instructed (Ezekiel 33:30-33).

5. By their words, parents have the opportunity to help children differentiate between fact and fancy. To exhibit faith is not always enough. Parents have the responsibility to reinforce their actions with conversation and direct communication.

Just as daily events are discussed in the home, God's Word should be shown to be relevant to daily living. Parents need not only a strong personal relationship with God but a living, active faith.

William Barclay⁵ writing about the early Church stated:

“The Church was far more concerned with the transmission of life, not facts. As the early Church saw it, the school is at best only an adjunct to the home. **It is the parent who is responsible for bringing the child into the world, and it is the parent who is responsible for bringing the child to God.** The child is the gift from God to the parents, and the child must be the gift of the parent to God.



4 Llovio, 21.

5 William Barclay, Educational Ideals in the Ancient World. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book, 1980) 261-262.

The Role of Parents & Godparents

Parents and godparents have a special responsibility to see that the children who are baptized are instructed in the good news of God's Salvation in Christ, the Church's Creeds and Catechism and all other things which a Christian ought to know, believe and practice as a member of the family of God.

They will also need your help and encouragement so that they learn to be faithful in public worship and private prayer, to grow in the knowledge, reverence and service of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father and to live by love and trust in God.

Parents, Godparents and candidates make a commitment to live by the promises they make in the Baptismal Covenant/ Promises in the service of Holy Baptism. These promises are renewed each year in the Easter Vigil service, at every baptism and at the Renewal of Baptismal Vows in the church.

All Baptised persons are asked the following questions:

Will you continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil and repent whenever you fall into sin?

Will you be a witness in your daily life to God's saving work in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ by loving your neighbour as yourself remembering that every person is loved and valued by God?

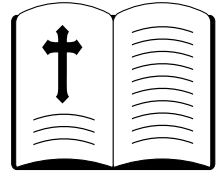
To which they respond – I/We will.

These commitments are not to be taken lightly.

Parents and Godparents can fulfil their commitment to the care and training of their children by living out these baptismal promises

Covenant Promise #1

“Will you continue in the Apostle’s teaching . . . “



How can parents continue in the Apostle’s teaching? By deepening their Christian Education.

Your children will learn about the Bible and the apostle’s teaching’ by observing and listening to you. But you need to know what to tell them when they come to you with their questions

What will you say when they ask about God, prayer, death, Jesus, why go to church? Forgiveness, why good people die young?

Have you ever thought about any of these questions and how you would answer if asked by your child?

How can you continue in the Apostles’ teaching?

Activities that foster your own spiritual growth will help you to be able to teach your child through word and action.

CONSIDER:

Attending church regularly – to be stimulated by the sermon

Attending a Bible Study – to get deeper into the biblical story and its application to modern life

Attending spiritual retreats

Attending Christian Education events

Covenant Promise #2

“Will you continue in the apostle’s teaching AND FELLOWSHIP . . . “

“We welcome you into our fellowship. We are members together of the Body of Christ; We are children of the same heavenly Father; We are inheritors of the kingdom of God. We welcome you.” (CPWI pg 313)

These warm words reflect the sense of friendship, and fellowship that distinguishes the family of God from other communities. It begins a story of belonging. Belonging first to God as children, then belonging to the community of love inaugurated by Jesus – the church, and finally belonging to our own family and friendship groups. God’s love is the glue or binding agent that holds all together as we live and grow together.

What will your child learn from you about what it means to be a vital part of the web of relationships that is church?

What will they learn from you about working together for the common good, working through disagreements, learning how to forgive and renewing relationships?

What will they learn from you about sharing time, laughter, and service with church friends? How can they learn if they are never in church?

Activities that involve you in the life of the church community will help you to demonstrate to your child what it means to remain in fellowship.

CONSIDER:

Attending church regularly

Assisting with Sunday worship by volunteering as an usher, altar guild member,

Joining a church group such as the choir, Mothers Union, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Womens’ Auxiliary and participating in outreach activities

Volunteering as a mentor for the youth group and teaching Sunday School

Sharing your skills and talents and learning new ones

Practice tithing and giving collection – and teaching your child how these Christian duties maintain the mission of the church

Covenant Promise #3

“Will you continue in the Apostle’s teaching and fellowship, IN THE BREAKING OF BREAD . . .” (BCP p, 266)

Grant that we, confessing our sins, may worthily offer to you our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice and eat and drink of your spiritual food in this Holy Sacrament. Amen. (BCP p. 101)



As we gather to feed at God’s table, we join with those who have been spiritually fed throughout the ages through the breaking of bread.

Jesus declares that he is the bread of life – the sustenance that we need to survive.

What will our children learn about Holy Communion if we do not take them to church, explain what is going on and show them how important this food of life is to us?

How can we fit church attendance into our busy schedule – or should we be deliberate in setting aside the time and teaching our children the value of this time for worshipping, and giving thanks to God?

CONSIDER:

Attending church regularly and preparing yourself to partake of Holy Communion

Teach your child about the different parts of the service of Holy Communion

Explain how special the food in Holy Communion is

Covenant Promise #4

“Will you continue in the Apostle’s teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, AND IN THE PRAYERS?”



The English word prayer means literally a request or petition. It is normally used in relation to God and more comprehensively communing with God, whether in an explicit petition such as the understanding of “ask and you will receive,” or in some other way, such as in quiet contemplation. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the author advises to “pray in the Spirit” on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. (Ephesians 6:18) (Excerpt from Spiritual Disciplines)

Prayers connect us to God and to each other as we offer petitions for the good of our community.

How often do you pray, do you think prayer is necessary? What will be the first prayer your child learns – who will teach them? Will your child learn to pray for others from your example?

Your child will learn about prayer from watching you more than anyone else.

CONSIDER:

Attending a spiritual retreat to learn more about different kinds of prayer

Use the Morning and Evening Prayer as a guide for daily home prayer – let a different member of the family lead – including your children when they are old enough

Create a prayer list and teach your child to pray for others and the community

Pray aloud with your child at every opportunity – at meals, on the way out of the home, giving thanks on your return, at bedtime

Create a family prayer

Set aside time for silent contemplative prayer – to allow God to speak to you – set aside a special place, use a candle or other focal item

Celebrate Advent with a home wreath and readings

Covenant Promise #5

“Will you persevere in resisting evil...”

As we listen to the news we realise that there is evil and wrongdoing in our local communities and the wider world. From local cases of violence to international trafficking in persons and broader issues of racial and social inequality – there is much to consider.

Our first response may be to say that we are not involved, it is not our business, therefore we will not participate in “resisting evil.” However, as Christians we have a mission to challenge the systems of evil and injustice around us.

4th Mark of Mission: To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

What will your child learn from you by watching how you stand up against racism? Poverty? Violence? Destruction of the earth? Chasing after wealth?

CONSIDER:

Engage your child in discussion about what brings holiness and what brings brokenness in this world.

Participate in groups that engage with social advocacy

Volunteer in church outreach to the vulnerable in the community

Participate in environmental groups

Covenant Promise #6

“Will you persevere in resisting evil, AND REPENT WHENEVER YOU FALL INTO SIN?”

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

A period of silence shall be kept (BCP p. 123)

It is in this period of silence that we reflect on our actions. The things we have done or left undone that have caused a strain in our relationships, things that separate us from God.

We are called to reflect on our actions daily.

What will our children learn from us about sin? How do we seek forgiveness from those we have hurt? How will we demonstrate forgiveness of those who have wronged us?

What will we teach our children about making mistakes – will we teach them to take responsibility and to seek forgiveness and make redress?

CONSIDER:

Spending time at the end of each day reflecting on our actions and impact on others

Talking with your child about mistakes and our response as Christians.

Talk to your child about forgiveness. How they give and accept forgiveness – and how they even forgive themselves

Covenant Promise #7

Will you be a witness in your daily life to God's saving work in Christ?

How do you live out your faith in your daily life? Do you walk and tell strangers about Jesus or are you more reserved?

We can all share the good news with others in our daily life.

How we treat persons and the values that guide our lives can influence others and open the conversation about Christ.

What will our children learn from us as they observe how we treat others? Do we embody the love, patience and mercy that Jesus taught? Or do they hear us speak the word and do the opposite?

CONSIDER:

Participating in Church Outreach missions

Invite others to come to church with you

Share friendship especially with those who are alone



Covenant Promise #8

Will you seek and serve Christ by loving your neighbour as yourself remembering that every person is loved and valued by God?

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them male and female he created them. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:27 & 31)

Do you value and affirm persons who are not like you, persons who are in another social class, race, gender? Or do you discriminate, put down, and prefer to not engage with them?

As you interact with others who are different, your children have a front row seat in observing you – they are learning how they will treat those who are different. What lessons will you be teaching?

How do you offer gifts of charity to others – is it out of genuine concern, for show or grudging duty? Does it make the recipient feel inferior? Did you show that you valued them as a fellow human being, as a son or daughter of God?

CONSIDER:

Serving at a soup kitchen

Volunteer to work with children in a children's home or school

Participate in racial and other social equality workshops and discussions

Participate in workshops on trafficking in persons and child and substance abuse so that you can become more empathetic and responsive

Engage Safe Church principles in your church organisations

Give generously to charitable organisations – and encourage your child to do the same

Covenant Promise #9

Do you put your whole trust in His grace and love?"

“Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always confound the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.” (BCP p. 178)

While the world focusses and affirms those who are self-made, the church and its members seek to build and affirm trust in the living God. The church affirms that our lives are a gift from God, who sustains and provides for us each day. We know that salvation comes not through our actions, we cannot earn it. Instead, it is a gift bestowed by God, through grace. We who have been redeemed by God, are called to live a new life, one that follows Jesus' example and teaching.

When all is well to whom do you give the commendation?

When there is a crisis, to whom do you turn?

As your child grows who will teach them how to trust God? How will they learn to rely on God rather than to stand in their own strength?

CONSIDER:

Speaking with your child about your life experiences that have demonstrated God's saving presence

Teaching your child to reflect on each day's experience – looking for how God was revealed in it

Teach your child to seek to communicate with God in prayer

Read Biblical stories of persons who trusted in God

Teach your child what God's grace means for them

CONCLUSION:

Baptism is but the start of the Christian life. We become members of God's family and must live out the commitments we make in our daily lives. Our children rely on us to set the examples for them to follow, as we raise them to become mature and well-rounded young people. We teach them how to survive and thrive in all aspects of their lives. However, they will need life-guides to show them the way. We are those life-guides for our children, as we take responsibility for leading our children to God. We must walk the Christian path so that our children will grow in the proper way.

Thankfully, this journey of faith is not done alone. The entire church family commits to support you and your family at baptism, and God goes before us. May we prayerfully seek God's guidance and wisdom in the care of our children as we seek to live out the life that God has blessed us with.

