

Suggestions for Celebrating and Remembering Baptism— for Families

The service of baptism marks a very special milestone in the life of your child or yourself, for your family and for the congregation. Welcoming a new member into the Christian family is something to celebrate. Claiming this membership for oneself is important to mark in a significant way. Here are a few ideas to consider:

1. Create a Baptism Memory Book

A baptism memory book might include a copy of the service of baptism, the baptism certificate, pictures of the baptism, cards received, and so on.

2. Plant a Tree or Seed

The growth of a tree is a beautiful way to symbolize the growth you are committed to in this baptism. Acknowledge that for growth to happen, it needs nurture and care and God's presence.

3. Share Baptism Conversations with the Extended Family

We are each wondrous, unique, loved children of God. Birth claims us as God's child; baptism claims our membership within the Christian church. Each are moments in our lives to be celebrated and affirmed.

The Baptism Conversation Cards on the DVD-ROM include questions directed at parents, siblings, and extended family, to help celebrate and remember

- expecting
- birth/adoption
- baptism
- birthdays
- baptism anniversaries

Distribute the cards to appropriate family members to fill out, adapting the questions to suit your situation, and start a scrapbook as an ongoing reflection and prayer for your child. Add to the scrapbook with conversation cards from your extended family as your child's life events unfold. Later, you can share the scrapbook with your child, perhaps on birthdays or baptism anniversaries.

FOR YOUR BAPTISM
FROM _____

At your baptism I _____

I am thankful to God for _____

I will share my faith with you by _____

I will help you grow in faith by _____

My hopes and dreams for you include _____

At your baptism my favourite part was _____

My baptism prayer for you is _____

4. Celebrate Baptismal Anniversaries

Most families have traditions for celebrating birthdays. Why not remember your child's baptism every year as well? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- On each anniversary of the baptism, take a picture of your child in front of the baptismal font and record ways your child has grown in faith over the past year in your baptism book.
- Light the baptismal candle on the anniversary date of the baptism. Tell stories of the baptism. Invite people who were present at the baptism to send stories or to join you in a special celebration.
- If you have a faith chest (see below), each year on the anniversary of the baptism add another resource—book, music, video, DVD, piece of nature—to help nurture your child's faith.
- As children grow older, they may wish to acknowledge those who have nurtured them in the faith on their baptism anniversaries with a note, card, drawing, or prayer.
- Say a prayer for the baptized person:
Thank you, God, for the gift of _____.
Thank you for her/his _____, _____, _____.
Bless her/him with love, care, patience, justice, and kindness.
Bless our family, we pray. Amen.

5. Create a Faith Chest

What is a faith chest?

A faith chest is

- a tangible reminder that nurturing faith has an important, visible place in the Christian home
- a container given to an individual by the congregation or family to keep Christian resources that encourage interaction with faith issues
- a symbol of a congregation's desire to partner with parents to bring faith to life for their children

What does a faith chest look like?

A faith chest can be

- a handmade, ornately crafted wooden container
- a large or small plastic storage container
- a wooden or plastic toy box
- a backpack
- a special cloth or canvas bag

Who receives a faith chest?

A congregation may give a faith chest to

- new parents as part of the baptism service
- youth when they become teenagers
- young adults when they leave home
- older people upon retirement

Who contributes to a faith chest?

- grandparents, church school teachers, mentors, friends, and relatives can contribute items for faith nurture
- a faith chest shower could express the partnership of the congregation and the home
- invite those coming to the baptism to contribute to the faith chest

What goes in a faith chest?

A faith chest might contain

- box of story figures
- a Bible or a Bible storybook
- songbook and cassette
- prayer books
- copy of the baptism and confirmation certificates
- classic children's books

The idea for the faith chest comes from Lee Hovel, *The Child in Our Hands Milestones: Worship Celebrations* (Minneapolis: Youth & Family Institute of Augsburg College, 1999).

6. Set Up a Home Worship Centre

We know that all of life is lived in God's presence, yet sometimes we need a space or time set aside to centre our lives—individually and as a family unit—on God, who gives us life and longs for all creation to enjoy abundant life.

As a family you might wish to create a worship centre or sacred space in your home. This space could be in the centre of the dinner table or a corner in the family room. Or you might encourage each member to find a quiet space, indoors or outdoors, where they are encouraged to know themselves in God's presence. Going to this space might offer the person or family a time of centring, quiet, or prayer, a time of connecting, reading scripture, or reflection and planning.

This worship centre/sacred space will provide the family with an intentional space and time to spend in God's presence, and to remind each of us that all of life is holy, a gift from God to be cherished.

Some things you might consider including in your worship centre:

- a Bible, Bible storybook, or Bible picture books
- fresh flowers or a plant
- a book of prayers
- family pictures
- a chalice or cup to share blessings
- a blessing bowl
- a gratitude journal or a prayer journal
- a candle
- story figures/crèche
- artwork by family members
- religious art
- items from nature