



# Baptismal Mission Forum



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## BAPTISMAL MISSION FORUM The Newsletter for Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission

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## FROM THE EDITOR

“Where’s a congregation to find printed materials to support their members in their missions in daily life?” When I’m asked this question (as I frequently am), I feel like leading the questioners into their churches and pointing to the small red books lining their pews. In this book lies a major resource for answering this question.

To show how Christ uses the Book of Common Prayer in his mission, this issue and the next issue of the Baptismal Mission Forum will be devoted to an examination of this subject. After the first article explores the overall theme of divine mission forming the basis of the whole Prayer Book, the following articles will investigate these sections in the book: in this issue, Baptism, and The Church Year; in the next issue, the Eucharist, the Daily Office, Pastoral Offices, Episcopal Services, and Prayers and Thanksgivings.

This is only a preliminary study of this important and exciting topic. If you have any questions or opinions about this topic, we will be glad to hear from you!

## HOW CHRIST USES THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER IN HIS MISSION

By Peyton G. Craighill



Just before Christ returned to his Father in heaven, he gave to us his followers our Great Commission – “Go into all the world to proclaim Good News!” He also promised to be with us always. Thus his Great Commission given to us implies

sharing with him in his continuing mission in “all the world”. His mission of love and justice for all people is also our mission! He calls us to share in his mission through everything that we do that we are willing to share with him.

But how do we know what Christ’s mission is, and how do we know how to share in his mission? The answer to these questions is through both formal and informal worship. Worship is the means through which we engage with the Risen Lord to receive from him his vision and his will for everything that we think and do in our daily lives.

In our day-to-day living we are constantly making decisions. How do we convert these decisions from “me-centered” decisions to “Christ-through-me-centered” decisions? The answer is both simple and profound: through both formal and informal worship.

Christ encounters us in worship through our many life cycles. These life cycles are both corporate/objective and also individual/subjective – both public and private. The corporate cycles can be long - including the entire cycle of creation, the history and destiny of humanity as a whole, and the servant community of God in particular. They can also be as short as a day or even shorter - an hour.

Because these cycles require us to make decisions, Christ uses these cycles to reveal himself to us. They may take the form of less important decisions, such as “Should I go to bed or keep on reading?” or life-changing decisions, such as, “Should I marry this man or shouldn’t I?” When we make both kinds of decisions, are they “me-centered” decisions or “Christ-through-me-centered” decisions? How does Christ and his mission inform such decisions? The answer is through Christ inspiring and guiding us in worship.

If we pick up a copy of the Book of Common Prayer and thumb through it casually, we can see that it is a collection of liturgies for a congregation to use at some time or other. But we can’t distinguish any pattern that’s holding the liturgies together in any order. It’s my conviction that if we look deeper, we will find that order. It exists in Christ communicating his mission to us, and we responding to Christ’s invitation through the power of our thanksgiving to God. This is the power that transforms “me” and “us” decisions into “Christ through me” and “Christ through us” decisions. As a result, our lives are transformed.

Here is how, through the Prayer Book, Christ uses our cycles of life to invite us share with him in his mission:

1. The entire cycle of life – Holy Baptism and the Pastoral Offices

All liturgies in the Prayer Book are founded on the rite of Holy Baptism. I’ll say no more than that, because I can refer you to the second article in this issue in which Fletcher Lowe writes with great eloquence about baptism. I will just point out that the Pastoral Offices – Confirmation, Marriage, Birth of a Child, Reconciliation, Ministration to the Sick, and Burial of the Dead – flow directly out of Baptism to include the entire cycle of life.

2. The annual cycle – Calendar of the Church Year

Every church year, we share with Christ in the cycle of his earthly mission, Advent through Ascension. After Pentecost, we live out the meaning of that great event through our missions in daily life shared with Christ. Read more about this subject in Wayne Schwab’s article in this issue.

3. The weekly cycle – Holy Eucharist

Every Sunday Christ’s Spirit gathers us to share with him in the Breaking of Bread. From this event, we renew our vision, power, and wisdom to live out our mission shared with Christ in all areas of our daily living, Monday through Sunday. More about this in my article in the next Baptismal Mission Forum.

4. The daily cycle – The Daily Office

The Daily Office provides a full day's cycle of prayer with Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline. These are designed to be used by a community. However, provision is made in the Prayer Book for Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families under the titles, In the Morning, At Noon, In the Early Evening, and At the Close of Day. These two sets of offices provide opportunities to pause during the working day to engage with Christ, renewing our dedication to the common effort to promote God's mission. More of this by Demi Prentiss in the next issue Baptismal Mission Forum.

5. The cycle of Episcopal ministry – Ordinations, Celebrations, Consecrations

Certain liturgical events require the presence of a bishop. The bishop represents the fact that we never worship alone.

However informal, however the prayer may be offered by a single person, we always know that we are a part of a multitude of voices lifted in prayer to God for all the world. We are baptized into the church universal, stretching back to Abraham in the past and to Christ's second coming in the future. And our mission, however local, is our offering with Christ in union with the Christian community everywhere. Tune in for more of this from Edward Lee in the next issue.

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# BAPTISM IS THE FOUNDATION FOR ALL LIFE IN CHRIST'S MISSION

BY FLETCHER LOWE



Baptism is the base sacrament that gives identity to Christians and undergirds all they are and do. It is not only a single event but an all pervasive and life long process. Over the centuries since Constantine, its power and significance for the Christian life have eroded away and its theology has become flawed. The challenge before the church today, in the midst of a changing cultural milieu, is to reclaim, rediscover, and recover that theology, that power, and that significance.

In the early days of the church, not only were Christians "marked as Christ's own forever", but because of their baptismal commitment, they were often marked by the existing culture as outsiders, subject to isolation, persecution, and at times, by death. To take on Christ was to risk one's life - literally to deny oneself, take up one's cross, and follow him into uncharted waters. This identification as a Christian came through Baptism.

In the early church, the norm was adult Baptism. Infrequently, there are scriptural and other church references to "households" being baptized. It's never clear, however, what "household" meant: *Other relatives in the house? Older parents? Aunts and uncles? Slaves? Older children? Infants?* The only clear model that emerges from the early church is the Baptism of committed adults.

To recover Baptism as the base theology for the Church, we must move back to our biblical and early church roots before the Constantinian distortions

began—away from the fear-driven societal norms of infant baptism and its corollary, the exalted role of the ordained (and the monastic) as the "true believers," and toward a deepened sense of the equal ministry of all the baptized in their daily life and work. In fact, if Baptism is *THE* sacramental act that declares one "to be marked as Christ's own forever", then the process of living into that identity becomes *THE* primary responsibility of the Church.

Those who developed the 1979 Book of Common Prayer had some prophetic insights into this new movement contained within it as a two-fold revolution. The first that has transformed the worship life of the Church is the Eucharist as the central service on the Lord's Day. But a far deeper and more subtle revolution is in Holy Baptism. It is like a tulip ready to flower. There are some embryonic evidences of this in the 1979 BCP. Central is the placement of the baptismal liturgy itself, placed first in order to set the tone for the other sacraments. In isolated ways that primacy is evidenced elsewhere: the blessing in the service of Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child, the preface to the Creed in the Burial of the Dead, and the Form Two Confession in the Reconciliation of a Penitent. But the revolution is yet to hit much of the BCP. For example, nowhere in the ordination service of a Deacon, Priest, or Bishop is there any mention of Baptism, including no provision for evidence that the person to be ordained was ever baptized! The Pastoral Offices aren't any better. And there is no reference to it in the Daily Office, either. Surely, if Baptism is at the heart of the Christian life, it needs to be integrated into and in-

integral to all the services of this church, a job waiting to be done.

Within the Baptismal Liturgy, heralding the revolution, is the Baptismal Covenant. It's the Christian's job description, providing direction for the practical ways by which the baptized manifest Christ in their daily life and work. The Covenant moves out in concentric circles from life within the Body to ministry and mission in the world: from the apostles' teaching and fellowship to striving for justice and peace among all people. Because of its importance as a signpost for our life in Christ, the Covenant needs to be copied from our Prayer Books, put on our refrigerators, on our desks, and bedside tables as a reminder of the call to which we continually respond in life.

As the Rt. Rev. Theodore Eastman has written, "The sacrament of Baptism is the ordination of

the Christian to ministry. It is the process of ignition that propels each Christian into the world in his or her own way and time." Christians are, therefore, by virtue of their Baptism, missionaries, people sent into the world to work and witness in daily life *for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, for this life, and for life everlasting!*

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*After serving for 37 years in three dioceses and in Europe, Fletcher Lowe has served as Convener for Episcopalian on Baptismal Mission. Recently, he published an e-book: Baptism: the Event and the Adventure, the Journey from the Font into the World, and co-edited a National Church's book, Ministry in Daily Life: Living the Baptismal Covenant.*

# THE CHURCH YEAR, LECTORY, PROPER LITURGIES FOR SPECIAL DAYS,

## AND THE CALENDAR

### TO INSPIRE AND SUPPORT ALL BAPTIZED PEOPLE

#### IN THEIR MISSIONS IN DAILY LIFE SHARED WITH CHRIST

By A. Wayne Schwab



*This article is intended primarily for individual Christians, seeking inspiration, support, and guidance for their daily life missions in Christ through Bible reading and worship; they may be useful to preachers and teachers as well.*

Church symbols call for imagination. How does one connect Christian symbols with one's daily life? The Holy Spirit fuels the imagination. Let the imagination play with the symbols and daily life experiences. Think afresh about the symbols. Think afresh about the various arenas of daily life – our homes, work, community (from our neighborhood outward to our town or city), the wider world (including everything from our region or country to the huge arenas of business, government, and social norms), leisure or play time, spiritual health and growth, and our church life. Let the symbol and the Spirit interplay with your life in one of these arenas. A variety of outcomes are possible from what you can do yourself to what you can tell or teach to others.

Love and justice are your guideposts or touchstones. Define them afresh for yourself – biblically based, just reworded. Maybe experience love as when, without limit, you seek to value others as they really are, and to care for them, forgive their faults, and help them to put their skills and talents to their best possible use. Maybe see justice as the public face of love. In public life, we love by seeking for everyone

equal access to the good things in life – whatever helps people to become all that they are created to be, and to put their skills and talents to their best possible use.

You may need to think afresh about evil and sin – the two blocks to love and justice. Evil is whatever blocks love and justice, thus separating people from God and from one another. Sin can be understood as evil chosen consciously.

#### The Church Year

Take a fresh look at the seasons of the church year. These seasons are weeks long. Here are some samples for those weeks, including a day in them. The samples used are in the order of the arenas of life noted in the first paragraph. Do note that, while the samples may seem relatively *inconsequential*, they were quite *substantial* to the people reporting them.

*Advent* is about coming. God comes among us. What seems to be coming or developing in my home life? In my friendships? What does the loving and just God appear to be doing or wanting to be done here? My partner and I find we are taking more time to chat with each other. We call it the Spirit helping us to come more closely together.

*Christmas* is about God among us, here and now. Work is work except during the times that I amaze myself by seeming to go beyond my usual abilities - God's work! A co-worker comes to me for help with a difficult problem, and I am able to give it - a gift of the Spirit!

*Epiphany* is about God appearing. We planned a block party, and we asked our next-door neighbors to help. That was a bold move. All on the block saw them as recluses; although friends and family came to see them, they never gave us the time of day. The alleged “recluses” were glad to be asked, worked hard, and now often stop to chat with us.

*Lent* is preparing for baptism at Easter. What is it like to experience baptismal living? I despair of the lobbyists who have taken over Washington! I find the Spirit giving me this antidote from my church’s public policy page – “Who is the most effective lobbyist in Washington? *I am!*”

*Easter* is new life, a fresh start. Tom overworks. He is surprised at how much playing basketball with friends relaxes and empowers him. He finds that he returns to work with fresh vigor and imagination.

*Pentecost* is about the Spirit’s presence and work among us today. Mary says that, at this season, prayer comes more easily, and seeing God at work in her life and the life of those around her happens more often. What has helped is getting time with God and time with the issues of daily life closer together. Prayer time leads her to issues of daily life and how to live them out with more care and being fairer. Times of seeing God at work in situations are increasing. Daily life and prayer are both newer and fresher than before.

*The church year* as a whole can be the church’s special gift to us to appreciate the various parts of our lives as unique, as well as God’s different missions through each part.

#### The Lectionary

Sunday’s Bible readings are selected to reflect on the seasons of the church year. The daily readings attempt to progress through all the books of the Bible in a three-year cycle; sometimes there is a secondary connection with the church year. Again, let the interplay of imagination between daily life and the text be entrusted to the Spirit. Love and justice continue as guides for the imagination.

For preachers and teachers, include with each of your presentations at least one example of how

your theme has been lived out by someone somewhere. For help in discerning the indications of justice in each of the Sunday readings, see *Preaching God’s Transforming Justice: A Lectionary Commentary, Year C*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2012). Its editors have been careful to use a broad range of contributors to insure a variety of insights.

#### The Proper Liturgies for Special Days

Again, find their connection with areas of daily life by relying on that interplay of text, imagination, and Spirit. Some starting points are noted below.

*Ash Wednesday* can raise questions about just what changes we will make in specific areas of our daily life.

*Palm Sunday* can relate to remaining loyal to specific missions or ministries in the midst of forces that seek to pull us away from them.

*Maundy Thursday* can suggest an experience of being called to a depth of caring and love not known before.

*Good Friday* can point to examples of being called to missions that are more costly than we expected.

*Holy Saturday* suggests both personal and social issues that, while they seem dead, can still find new life.

*The Great Vigil of Easter* – a suggestion for planners: include a reading from a prophet, calling for correction of social injustice; from the Vigil, begin the Eucharist with Holy Baptism following the Gospel and sermon; the Eucharist continues with the Prayers of the People to its end with the dismissal; a festive meal concludes the celebration. Personal and social stories of the Spirit’s works of death and resurrection can reflect the good news of God’s reign among us.

Our daily lives always have two issues – how to be loving and how to be just. These two words are the core of God’s will for how we live in any season.

### The Calendar

*Principal feasts* are discussed above.

*Sundays, Holy Days, and Days of Special Devotion, and Days of Optional Observance*, like the feast days, are well served with the interplay of the Spirit, the themes of the appointed lessons, one's imagination, and how a member, or members, are living out some aspect of those themes in any of their daily mission fields. In particular, the saints' days or days of unique church leaders call for beginning one's imaginative reflections around the specific mission field or fields in which that person's service was rendered. For example, William Laud, serving in both the church and the wider world of government, calls for the story of a contemporary leader, either in today's church, or in the complex realities of church and state relations in our nation.

In all, God's mission to make the world more loving and more just and our part in that mission are central.

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## IS THERE A CONNECTION BETWEEN MY CAREER AS AN ATTORNEY AND MY FAITH?

By Lisa McKnight

I am a corporate “transactional” attorney, which means that I work for a corporation (UPS Freight), as opposed to a law firm, and that I primarily work on transactions that the company is involved in, such as buying or selling real estate or entering into a contract for some type of services or goods. Because of this, I work with people in many different positions within the company. From Service Center Managers that are at locations all over the country to senior management here in Richmond. I negotiate and write all kinds of contracts – contracts to buy software, to lease trucks, to acquire janitorial services, to hire guards at our terminals. If it involves a contract of any type, I’m usually involved in it. They can be very insignificant contracts or multimillion dollar contracts.

When Fletcher Lowe originally asked if he could visit me at work to discuss the “faith connection”, that is the connection between what I do to make a living and my faith, I agreed reluctantly. Not because I was reluctant to talk with Fletcher or because I was reluctant to talk about either my work or my faith. I just wasn’t sure I saw any connection between the two. So, I agreed, but planned to rely on Fletcher to steer the conversation, because I really couldn’t draw a connection there. I mean, after all, how could working as an attorney for a trucking company tie in to God’s work anyway?

I should have known that Fletcher had a different take. In our discussion, he challenged me to see how the gifts I have and the work I do is in fact God’s work. That drafting up a contract fairly, is applying my faith and the values rooted in my faith. That treating my fellow employees with respect, behaving in an ethical manner, and being able to help two parties work through issues and come up with a problem solving approach, rather than a conflict based disagreement, is doing God’s work. That, in fact, doing what I have the skills to

do, using whatever talents I may have, is God’s work.

It was a revelation to me! I tended (and still tend, it’s hard to re-train my brain after 48 years), to view “God’s work” as what the priests and choir directors and youth ministers and Mother Teresas of the world do. I viewed the “work world” as separate from the “faith world”. To my mind, God’s work is things like... serving guests at CARITAS (a homeless shelter), even writing a check for an African mission project. It turned that assumption on its ear to see that maybe simply applying the talents God gave me is, in fact, also doing “God’s work”. As dry and un-faith-like as writing up a contract sounds – it did seem possible that somehow that type of work might also serve God’s purpose. And, in that setting, St. Paul’s and the community there, isn’t separate, but is a foundation, as Fletcher likes to say, a “base camp”, for the rest of the week – a place to focus, resupply, and prepare to go back out and do whatever work is set out before me.

I suppose, that is the bottom line – that God’s work can take the shape of every type of labor and effort in the world. All that variety of work has to occur in order for the world to move forward; for the community of humankind to prosper (in a spiritual sense, as well as a material one). And the most important thing is to use what gifts we each have – gifts as diverse as the work to be done – to tackle the work that is set before us. What a concept. God is truly amazing!

## REPORTS FROM DIOCESES ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN BAPTISMAL MISSION

By Demi Prentiss



In 2003, General Convention adopted re-write of Title III Ministry. In its new form, Canon 1.1 charged every diocese to “make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

- (a) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.
- (b) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.”

In 2009, I surveyed all 100 domestic dioceses of The Episcopal Church about this charge, learning that only about one-third had begun to work on it, generally through their Commissions on Ministry (COMs). Recently, members of Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission (EBM), an organization to which I belong, have been in conversation with diocesan leaders, learning more about how dioceses are living into this canon. EBM, with its emphasis on daily-life mission, is encouraging every congregation to engage in its call to equip and support all their members in sharing with Christ in his mission, wherever they are in their daily life and work.

Here are some of those diocesan reports to EBM:

**Chicago:** On the website, there is clear emphasis on ministry of the laity through baptism, found especially in the testimonials on their “Baptismal Ministry” page. (<http://www.episcopalchicago.org/at-work-in-the-church/commission-on-ministry/baptismal-ministry/>)

**Oregon:** The diocesan Committee for Baptismal Ministry Development (COM-B) has developed resources

([http://www.episcopaldioceseoregon.org/files/Baptism\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.episcopaldioceseoregon.org/files/Baptism_Booklet.pdf)), and a discernment process that calls for exploring congregational, missional, and ordained ministries as possibilities.

([http://www.episcopaldioceseoregon.org/PPM/Discerning\\_Baptismal\\_Ministry2007.pdf](http://www.episcopaldioceseoregon.org/PPM/Discerning_Baptismal_Ministry2007.pdf))

In addition, their clergy are engaging in a study of the Rev. Dwight Zscheile's book *People of the Way – Renewing Episcopal Identity*. Zscheile writes, “If lay disciples are the primary ministers, then the church's life must be reorganized around equipping them for faithful service and witness in their spheres of influence..., [and] to sustain and nourish lay disciples' ministries in the world, which is where God primarily needs them.”

**East Tennessee:** Rick Govan, the diocese's deputy for ministry and congregational development, reports, “many – if not most – parishes have transitioned away from the old model of a worshipping community gathered around an ordained minister to a community of ministry participants. Indeed, the Baptismal Covenant is the primary road map, but we also emphasize Holy Scripture, the BCP's Outline of Faith, and the practical benefits of mission focused lay ministry.” Learn more about the diocese's work – including their concept paper on shared ministry, “The Gifts Among Us” – here: <http://www.dioet.org/Formation/shared-ministry.html>

**Mississippi:** In addition to their bishop's strong focus on baptismal mission, COM chair the Rev. Melanie Dickson Lemburg reports that the diocesan COM has recently put together a task force of COM members to develop, “a diocesan-wide discernment process that can be reproducible in any parish or mission to be used to discern calling for ministry – both lay and ordained.”

**Southern Ohio:** The Rev. Lynn Carter-Edmands, canon for formation, reports that the COM has “made a commitment to spend as much time on the discernment and support of lay vocations as it does on ordained vocations.” The diocese already has three active intentional communities and is developing a fourth. The members “are committed in one form or another to a simple sustainable lifestyle, learning to share resources and expenses, and discern and live into their vocations as they share life together in the neighborhood.”

Also, the diocese employs a Fresh Expressions missionary, the Rev. Jane Gerdzen. And Campus Ministries missionary, the Rev. Karl Stevens, works to help students develop a community of practice and a process for vocational discernment.

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Comments and questions about articles in this publication are indeed welcome. Contact information is on the first page.