



Baptismal Mission Forum



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BAPTISMAL MISSION FORUM The Newsletter for Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission

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FROM THE EDITOR

In the previous issue of this publication, I promised that we will strive to understand better the practical implications of the baptismal covenant for Christ's mission of his world revolution.

This revolution (called by Jesus "the Kingdom of God" and by Paul "the New Creation") takes place when we Christians respond to Christ's call to us to act out our power and authority in everything we do according to Christ's will, instead of conforming to human standards and our own will.

We will use the six mission areas, (home, workplace, local community, the wider world, leisure activities, and our congregations) available to each of us for living out our baptismal mission.

In the previous issue, we considered the home environment; now we turn to our places of work. The four articles above illustrate this process in a variety of workplaces – art studio, home, corrections agency, and university classroom.

TWELVE PRINCIPLES OF THE MOVEMENT FOR BAPTISMAL MISSION IN DAILY LIFE

By Peyton G. Craighill

1. **God is always on mission.** Because God is love, God is never remote or passive. Divine love is *the greatest power in the universe*, reaching constantly into every corner of creation. God is always on mission, creating, liberating, and sustaining – serving as the archetypal missionary.
2. **God formed a servant people to share in God's mission.** Through the covenant with Abraham, God established a servant people as partners in mission through all time and in all places.
3. **God prepared a servant people to share with God on mission.** Through their baptism in the Red Sea and their covenant instituted by Moses at Mount Sinai, God's servant people were prepared for sharing in God's mission.
4. **God sent Jesus on mission into our world.** In the fullness of time, God sent Jesus on mission into our world to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God.
5. **In his baptism, Jesus revealed his mission.** Through Jesus' baptism, the Father revealed him to be God's Son, come to share with the Father in mission among all of God's servant people and among all nations.
6. **Christ instituted the New Covenant.** At the Last Supper, Christ instituted the New Covenant with God's servant community. Through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, he ratified that Covenant.
7. **The Bible and church history are the story of God's mission.** On the basis of the progression outlined above, we see that the story of the Bible is the narrative of God's mission in and for the world. This missional narrative has continued throughout the history of the church. Church history is the history of God's mission through God's servant people, spreading out to cover God's world with the knowledge and practice of divine love and justice.
8. **Still today, the church is an agent of God's mission.** The church has no mission of its own. Its only mission is to share in God's mission in ways appropriate to each time and place. God establishes every congregation to promote God's mission in its local setting. Every congregation is God's "base camp" for mission. Mission isn't a secondary, peripheral activity of the church; it's *why the church exists!*
9. **Through baptism, we share in God's mission.** Baptism is the rite through which all people, whether infants or adults, are commissioned by Christ to share in God's mission. The Baptismal Covenant provides the guidance by which baptized people grow in maturity as they share in God's mission in their daily lives. Every baptized member of the church is Christ's missionary!
10. **Daily-life missions are carried out in seven areas.** The areas in daily life where baptismal mission is carried out, Monday through Sunday, are the following: home, workplace, leisure, community, wider world, spiritual formation, and church ministries. Normally, members accomplish their missions-in-Christ in these areas through their customary daily-life activities.
11. **Congregations prepare members to share in God's mission.** The congregation should be the organization that promotes preparation for mission in daily life by providing resources that inspire, form, guide, and support their members

on mission, Monday through Sunday. Leaders need to plan all aspects of congregational ministry – liturgical, formation, pastoral, and service-oriented – to reflect this missional spirit. Congregations who are primarily focused on *attracting in* more members into their activities should change their primary focus to *sending out* their members on God’s mission.

12. Wider ministries support congregations in their daily-life missions. The wider ministries of the church in dioceses, seminaries, educational and publishing centers, and in national church programs need to support their local congregations in their efforts to accomplish this paradigm shift to a missional orientation for all their ministries.

Peyton Craighill served as a missionary, primarily in theological education, in Taiwan for 21 years. After returning to the USA, he served in a number of different ministries in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. In retirement, he lives in Lexington, Virginia.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORDS "MINISTRY" AND "MISSION"?

By Peyton G. Craighill

This a confusing question for two reasons. The first is that the traditional assumption about the meaning of the two words, under the pressure of an arising new definition for them, has gradually faded into the background. The second confusion arises from the people who accept the new definitions but don't know how to use the two words in their new context.

For the better part of my life, the word "ministry" meant what ordained ministers do – leading worship, preparing sermons, calling on parishioners, organizing parish programs, and all the other activities that go along with their vocation. Now, with the recognition that the term "minister" applies to *all baptized people*, the meaning of "ministry" must be broadened to include lay ministers as well as ordained ministers. The new definition of "ministry" that includes both groups is, anything that baptized people do to serve Christ's mission.

This leads directly into the similar change that has occurred in church circles in the meaning of the word "mission". In the earlier years in my life, "mission" meant a specialized activity in church life done by specially-trained people called "missionaries". It meant crossing boundaries of nationality, language, culture, race, or poverty to reach out to people in need to proclaim to them the Good News of God in Christ. Now that meaning too has been broadened through a recognition of the call of Christ to *everyone* who has been baptized. As Christ began *his* call to his mission out of *his* baptism, so too he calls *us* to mission in his name through *our* baptism. Everyone who has been baptized is called by Christ to be a *missionary* in his service!

Consequently, all baptized people have both a *mission* and a *ministry*. But how are these two words related to each other? This is how I answer this question.

For the word "mission", I looked in my dictionary to find there that the original meaning of the word is "to send" (derived from the Latin word, *mittere*). Thus a missionary is someone who is sent by Christ on mission.

For "ministry", again I looked in my dictionary and found that the word originally meant "service". In a Christian context, it means service to or with Christ.

Putting the two words together, Christ sends the baptized on *mission* to carry out *ministries* for or with him. To borrow two words from the military, the word *strategy* is comparable to the word *mission*, and the word *tactic* is comparable to the word *ministry*. "Mission" refers to the overall plan; "ministry" refers to the way that mission is carried out.

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HOW THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT SHAPES MY DAILY LIFE AS A PAINTER

By Michael Von Helms

Initially I was intrigued to be invited to write on how the Baptismal Covenant shapes my daily life, but after struggling with the responsibility to be truthful, genuine, and open to some degree of self-examination, I find myself unable to proceed with either authority or confidence. I worry that I may not have enough experience on this subject, and that the writing may be somewhat glib and lack integrity. I feel that almost any writing from me may sound like a rush to simplistic conclusions. I know this uneasiness grows out of my frequently indifferent heart. Simply put, I suffer from intermittent interest. This is probably a defense against the reality that, although God has certainly forgiven me my sins of old, I have learned that the church's adjudicating is not as forgiving as is my Lord's. I feel a certain inadequacy and indignation.

How does a sinner preach or speak to the world about a mission, or a reformation, or write about baptismal influences in daily life with any real authenticity? Unless of course he has arrived at a "certainty." Perhaps this doubting will propel me to seek a more thorough, adventurous, and valuable resolution...

I attempt to live my "belief," realizing that there is salvation by *sola fide*, faith alone, but my deeper anxiety, my shame, is that in my life there are embarrassingly few concrete "works." Then I recall the words of 12th-century Sufi mystic and holy man Rumi:

"Come come Whoever you are!
Wanderer, worshipper, Lover of leaving,
Come this is not a Caravan of despair.
It does not matter if you have broken your vows a
thousand times,
Still come. And yet again, come."

It can be difficult to connect the dots of Saint Paul's advice, which counsels to live a life free from anxiety. How do I do that? I must, for my sanity, seek some solitude, some alone time with

God, and accept that rising out of this self-imposed silence is the gift, the miracle of prayer..."in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." This resource, this humble act of 'calling out to God,' eventually frees me from my egocentric, perceived fears. It has become a form of education for me, because it has taught me to trust. Trust in God, only. In this trusting act of extending myself toward God, I have made a commitment, an exercise in loving. This then allows me to feel "that peace" beyond understanding.

I have finally come to know that, if I cannot mirror Christ, I must at least attempt to live the life of the Gospels, hoping that through prayer and trusting in God's love of and mercy toward me, I will always be seen and cherished by Him who has known and loved me before time began. Though I accept that some of my life is a shipwreck, I have been given the hope that I do not have to perish with its foundering... "Yahweh...do not discipline me in wrath...do not desert me...do not stand aloof...Come quickly to my help." He then "stooped...heard my cry...pulled me up...set my feet on rock." As I look down the path of my past, I have come to believe in God's great mercy. "Send out your light and your truth; they shall be my guide."

How can I love the Lord each day? After years of devotion to my career as a fine art painter, I have discovered that the creative life is my calling. It is a life journey that is often amorphous, without clear goals or paths to achievement. I cannot perform at a high level of creativity unless I seek to apply some of the practices employed by the well-known Desert Fathers. Within the solitude of my studio, I have been forced to face - as well as deal with my "masks"- the old realities of my false and shallow self...my emptiness, my weaknesses, my anger, my angst. Grinding and pushing hard enough and long enough through creative work, I turn and morph into a place of resolution. My inner

self, my agitated ego, my anxieties and self-confrontations have been exhausted. The inner man, the world without, this “seeking” are now united - there is consummation and salvation. I transcend the preoccupation with myself discovering the invisible, subtle essence of my God, my “purpose” and the compelling presence of this One Truth.

As I ripen, I have learned to cease hesitating, to wake and wear “the armor of light,” to go forth and try to “live honorably,” and so “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” For now I know, He is here among us, always.

Michael von Helms is a fine art painter, known as a non-figurative abstractionist. He has spent much of his life in Santa Fe, NM, and now lives in Houston, TX. He describes his paintings as dialogs between his inner self and a higher power.

FAITH AT WORK IN A CORRECTIONS PROGRAM

By Bruce N. Cruser

During a usual workday at Henrico County's Community Corrections Program, I don't think much about God or my faith. But a recent visit to my office from a priest reminded me how my core faith guides most of what I do in my job.

The agency provides an alternative to jail for adults, ordered by the court to pre-trial or local probation supervision. In the process of pondering a question from the priest, I realized again why I love my work (well, most of it, anyway).

One statement from the Baptismal Covenant has had special emphasis for me: "*I will respect the dignity of every human being*". It's a core value of my social work profession as well. To be effective in working with mandated clients, people from all walks of life, it helps to look for the human potential - each person's strengths and who they are, not just their problems or what they have done. Some clients curse and yell. Some send thank-you notes. Sometimes they are the same clients.

I'm responsible for managing the agency, so most

of my direct interaction is with our staff, helping them get what they need and to stay motivated in order to feel valued and energized in their underpaid work. In dealing with staff members who may be upset or in conflict, I may fall short. But I try to respect the dignity in every human being. How can I be a better supervisor to that person? What commitment have I made to my employees and then not delivered? Am I being the best steward I can with the agency's very limited resources? How can my interaction with this person right now make a difference?

The priest's visit helped me to realize that I'm one of those very fortunate people whose faith, values, and occupation are in good alignment. Few jobs are perfect fits, and I grow weary of certain tasks, but even most of those in some way contribute to helping the agency accomplish its mission.

THE WORK OF PARENTING AND BAPTISMAL MISSION

By Undisclosed

When four friends came over to play with my nine-year-old Sally, she disappeared. I found her under her bed crying, “They don’t want to play with me.” I had been here before with Sally who can have a “dialog” in her head of what happens rather than a dialog about reality – about what’s really happening. It was happening again. I said, “Sally, your friends have been looking all over the house for you. They want to play with you.” As before, I had to keep it up for some time before Sally finally believed it, dried her eyes, and came out to play.

I knew this situation could repeat for some time, and it did. She was not hiding under the bed, but hiding in various ways from the good things happening to her at the time. I was patient with her and, when she was despondent about something, I was ready to point out the good things in the situation that were the reality. In time, Sally learned to think more positively.

The happy ending is that Sally is now a ninth-grader with lots of friends. She is a first-rate swimmer on the school’s swimming team and keeps improving. Recently, she shaved 15 seconds off of her 200-meter freestyle time and was on top of the moon. She raises money for events of the swimming team by writing for donations to the parents of friends and to aunts and uncles and grandparents.

Parenting is hard work! It’s one of those ongoing baptismal missions. To paraphrase, “Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving my child as myself”!

For obvious reasons, the author of this article does not want her name used. Also, the name used here of her daughter is not her real name.

LIVING THE BAPTISMAL PROMISES THROUGH TEACHING AT A UNIVERSITY

By Marcy Orr

I've been asked to discuss my work in the light of the baptismal promises, which (to paraphrase the Apostle Paul) is the very thing I am eager to do.

I'm on the faculty of Virginia University of Lynchburg, a historically black university. I teach both Bible and psychology classes. VUL is experiencing many of the same challenges that face other historically black schools: money is tight; good students have many other options; the students we serve are frequently unprepared both academically and socially; our buildings that are over a hundred years old don't fit the needs and expectations of 21st century students; and society believes that there is no longer a need for the education that we offer because other schools are no longer segregated. In this setting, where all of my students and most of my colleagues are African-American, I am the minority. I'm working in a different culture - and yet I have never felt more at home.

The last three questions of the five baptismal promises strike me as the most relevant to my work.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

A few years ago, a friend of mine sent me a small book of sayings that his daughter had collected before she was killed in an automobile accident. I was so moved by the gift and the content that I began to put one of her sayings on the board in my classroom each morning. I figured that, if they were important to her, they might

speak to my students as well. One day, in the rush of getting started, I forgot. When I began the class, the students were frowning and looking at each other. I asked them what was wrong, and they asked, "Where is the saying?" One student told me he tweeted them to his friends and family. Another student started a club called The Notebook to collect similar inspirational sayings and stories. I've expanded the original collection of sayings to include scripture and quotes from Mother Teresa. They have become an important part of my teaching. I always remember the words of St. Francis, "Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words."

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbors as yourself?

I don't work at VUL out of the goodness of my heart. I go there, not out of a sense of noblesse oblige, not from a position of financial and social superiority, but because I have a family to support. It's my job, and I need a job. It helps my ministry that I need the work. Needing others is a way of loving them. I need to be needed, and that's one reason that I love my job. I know that this school needs me. But just as important - or perhaps more important - I need them. We share the financial stress, and we care for one another in that reality. I'm not there because I feel sorry for my students, or because I feel guilty for racism, or for any other supposedly altruistic reason. I'm there because I need a job, and to that extent I can honestly say, "We are all in this together."

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Early in the semester, I usually find a way to tell the story of my maternal grandfather. He came to America from Italy when he was about 10 years old and began to work in a coal mine with his father and older brother. When he was about 20, the street car that was taking him home from work derailed, and his arm was broken. He got \$250 as a settlement from the streetcar company. He gave his father the equivalent of two years' salary and declared, "I'm not going back down into that hole." Instead, he went with a friend who was attending Ohio Northern University. He used to tell me, "A poor boy could work his way through school there". When he arrived at college, he couldn't read or write English. Five years later, he graduated and went to the University of Pennsylvania medical school. After he became a doctor, he went back to help the miners and their families who couldn't get medical care from other doctors.

I tell this story for several reasons. First, it tells the students that my ancestors were not slave holders and gets white guilt out of the way. I tell them, "that's not my baggage, and I'm not going to carry it." They know exactly what I mean, and I invariably get a laugh. Second, it tells them that my grandfather came from a situation that was as bad as, or even worse than, theirs. If he made it, so can they. Finally I say, "Ohio Northern was the kind of school for my grandfather that I want VUL to be for you. It not only changed

his life; it changed mine as well. If he had not refused to go back down into that hole, I would not have had the opportunity to get my education. This is your chance to help yourself and your family. Take advantage of it."

I love my students because each of them reminds me of my grandfather. I respect them because they are trying to do better and be better than society expects of them. For my students, justice means punishment. Punishment is not justice. For my colleagues, justice means compensation for past offenses. That's not justice, either. Justice is incompatible with pity. Justice means that we all have equal value in God's eyes, regardless of the value society places on us. Likewise, peace is not *avoiding* conflict and not *appeasing* violence. It's *resolving* conflicts; it's finding ways to *solve* problems without resorting to violence. It takes respect for others to deal with them honestly as equals and not as objects. We experience justice and peace when we respect the rights of others as equal to our own, and insist that they do the same.

In the baptismal liturgy, the response to each question is, "I will, with God's help." That's true of everything in life—when we succeed in living up to our baptismal promises, it's always because of God's help. When we fail, it's because we rely on ourselves alone. I pray that God will enable me to proclaim the gospel, to love my neighbors, and to respect all people, and so bring the Kingdom closer.

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