

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 2

The Apostles Baptized People

FOCUS

When the Church was born at Pentecost, Peter and the apostles baptized 3,000 people. The learners should be able to tell this story, noting that people come to be baptized in the Church today.

GETTING READY

Sessions 2 through 4 of this unit are based on just five verses from *Acts 2*. In this introductory session, we look at the early Christian community as a baptized people; in the succeeding sessions, the overall aim is to help young learners consider the significance of the sacrament of Holy Baptism. (We will return to the *Acts of the Apostles* in Unit IV, but with a different focus: to examine the lives of individual persons who were important to Luke, the writer, as he described the Church's beginnings.)

After Matthias was chosen to join the eleven apostles, they gathered in one place. Suddenly, a great wind rushed about the house and tongues of fire appeared. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in new languages. The apostles began preaching to the people outside. The crowd could not believe that the apostles could speak in different languages so that everyone who had gathered there could understand their message.

The apostle Peter preached boldly to his fellow Jews. He declared that the work of Jesus Christ, now raised from the dead, had been foretold by the prophet Joel. He declared, "This very Jesus is Lord and Messiah."

The people were deeply touched. They wanted to know what they could do. Peter urged that they repent, seeking forgiveness of their sins. On that very day, 3,000 people responded and sought baptism from the apostles.

Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you turn us from the old life of sin: Grant that we, being reborn to new life in him, may live in righteousness and holiness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

At Baptism

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children will enjoy field trips and visitors more if they are prepared ahead of time. Discuss who will be coming or where the group will be going. Suggest questions the children might ask or specific things to look for. Give simple, clear directions.

GATHERING

Display Poster No. 4 of a baptismal font, a banner, and a Paschal Candle from the Teacher's Packet. As the learners arrive, point out the items on the poster. Ask when and where these might be seen. Ask: How would you explain these pictures to someone who had never seen them?

When all are present, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

(You may wish to continue using Poster No. 11 of the Creed from the Teacher's Packet.)

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Tell the story of Peter's sermon and the baptism of thousands. Open the Bible and show the learners where *Acts 2:38-40* is located. Read aloud verse 38:

“Peter said to them, `Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.
The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by inviting the children to recall the most recent service of Holy Baptism they attended. How many persons were baptized? How many persons come to our congregation's worship each week? Can you guess?

2. Share with the learners the fact that we become members of the Church through our baptism. This has been true ever since Jesus' death and resurrection.

3. Describe the scene after Pentecost when Peter and the other apostles began to tell people that Jesus, who had been raised from the dead, was truly the Son of God for whom God's people had waited so long. Peter preached a sermon about Jesus that caused people to listen closely. They believed what he said. They asked, “What should we do?”

4. Peter told his hearers to repent and be baptized. By “repent” he meant “turn around” and be different: Stop opposing what God is doing and accept Jesus as Messiah. Do what God wants you to do.

5. So 3,000 people did what Peter said. They were baptized that day by Peter and the other apostles. (Compare 3,000 with the number of people in your own congregation.)

6. Many more people were baptized by the apostles. The church was growing, and there were more and more people who became Christians.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 2, describes how Jesus' apostles baptized people in the names of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. 3,000 Baptized

Provide each learner with a sheet of construction paper and a small dish

of poster paint. Ask the class members to place their thumbs in the paint and stamp them on their sheets of paper as many times as possible. Repeat until the paper is filled. Enjoy counting how many thumbprints could be stamped by each learner. When the paint is dry, add faces and other details with fine-point markers.

Option 2. Baptism Picture

Give learners paper and crayons. Ask them to draw a picture of a baptism. Suggest they look at Poster No. 4 from the Gathering that shows a baptismal font, a banner and a Paschal candle for ideas. Learners can label the people at the baptism if they wish to do so.

EXPLORING THE STORY (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Option 1. Game, “Stand Up, Sit Down”

Gather the players in a circle, and invite them to sit in chairs or on the floor. Tell them to stand if the statement they hear is about baptism, and to sit if it is not. Read the following statements:

1. Peter preached a sermon at Pentecost. (stand)
2. Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah. (sit)
3. Three thousand were baptized at Pentecost. (stand)
4. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fled to Egypt to escape Herod. (sit)
5. Jesus went to the temple when he was twelve. (sit)
6. Peter said, “Ask for the forgiveness of your sins. . . .” (stand)
7. “(The Christians) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship. . . .” (stand)

Other statements may be added by the teacher or at the suggestion of the learners.

Option 2. Puzzle, “The Apostles Baptized People”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.2 titled “The Apostles Baptized People.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

Option 3. Find the Answer

Invite the learners to find *Acts 2* in their Bibles. Note that the *Acts of the Apostles* is in the New Testament right after the Gospels. In the story of the first Pentecost, the people asked Peter, “What shall we do?” Ask the class members to work in pairs to find Peter's answer.

Ask the learners: Who is the promise for? What did the people devote themselves to?

TALKING IT OVER (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

This story is about 3,000 people who were baptized at one time. Ask: How do you think the apostles managed to do it? If you had been there with a camera, what would your pictures show? After all the people were baptized, where do you think they went? What might they have said to others about what happened?

Talk with the group about what baptisms are like in your own congregation. Have the learners been to a service of baptism where many people were baptized? What was it like?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Visit the baptismal font in your church. Before taking this field trip, explain that each learner should study the font carefully so that when the group returns to the classroom, everyone will be prepared to draw a detailed picture. Compare the font in your congregation with the one on Poster No. 4 used in the Gathering (above). Another possibility would be to gather the group around the font for a group picture made with an instant camera. Post the scene in the classroom.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached about Jesus. When the people heard him, they” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What did the people think? What did the apostles do?

Individual response. The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a “right” way to finish the story.

Group role play. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can dramatize the scene in which Peter and the other apostles baptize members of the crowd.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing again with the *Children Sing!* tape “Descend, O Spirit” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 297; *We Sing of God*, 50), using again the following motions:

- Descend, O Spirit, (*move arms in downward, swooping movement*)
- purging flame, (*bring hands together in front, and fan them upward and outward like a flame*)
- brand us this day with Jesus' Name! (*make the sign of the cross on foreheads*)
- Confirm our faith, (*stand tall and fold arms in front*)
- consume our doubt; (*move arms in a large circle outward*)
- sign us as Christ's, within, without. (*form cross with arms extended*)

CONTINUING ACTIVITY (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Baptismal Banner. Continue to work on the baptism banner introduced in Session 1. Make patterns from the adopted design and begin to cut from the felt.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 20 has a picture of a priest and a family at a baptismal font, the baptismal formula, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We thank you for the Sacrament of Baptism.

(Other thanksgivings can be offered)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

The baptism of thousands at the first Pentecost is the beginning of this sacramental rite in the Church. Have the children gained a sense that the story of baptism is continuous from the time of the apostles until today in your own congregation? Are they able to see a connection between a baptism that happened at a river and what happens at the font in their own church?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session looks at details of a service of Holy Baptism as it is administered in the Church today. Spend some time reflecting on a baptism you have witnessed recently. Review in *The Book of Common Prayer* the order of the service and the italicized directions (rubrics).