**Ritual of Remembering/Anticipating Baptism: For children and families**

*Background:*

Jesus was baptized but he did not ever baptize anyone. At least, if he did, it is not recorded in scripture. There are many unknowns in regards to exactly how Jesus was baptized and why he placed so much importance on it. baptism has been debated theologically for years and much of what we believe about it has been hammered out in theological debates. The result is that different denominations have varied views of the role of baptism in the life of a person and exactly what the Rite of Baptism accomplishes. The United Methodist Church believes in infant baptism, and at the same time, honors a range of choices. People of all ages are welcomed into the church through baptism, and their ages vary from newborn, to young child, to teen and to adults. Some parents will have their babies baptized and some parents will want their child to wait until their teens years to choose baptism for him or her self.

This *Ritual of Remembering Our Baptisms* then, is not only a service of remembering baptisms, but it also acknowledges that some children and adults have not yet been baptized. As a result, it also serves as a ritual of anticipation of a person’s baptism that will happen at a future date and as they are ready. When I used this ritual on a regular basis, one of the unintended outcomes was that people of all ages, young children, teens and adults, started asking to be baptized. It started deep conversations about who could be Baptized, why other faith traditions do or do not Baptize infants, the importance of confirmation and why a person only receives their baptism once.

This ritual also helps create a “memory” for those who were baptized as infants. The number one reason people ask me for a “re-baptism” is because they cannot remember their baptism. This ritual of remembering lets them come to the baptismal font, feel the water and be reminded that, while they cannot remember their own baptism, it happened. It makes it “real” for children and adults.

*The evolution of Baptism*

Most scholars believe that Baptism evolved from the Mikvah Bath Ritual practiced by Jews long before time of Christ. The baths were used to ritually purify ones body before entering the Temple. Men had one bath and women had a separate one.

Some scholars believed that John was opposed to the Temple authorities and their close financial ties to the Romans and had set up a make-shift mikvah at the Jordan.

All we know for sure, is that Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan and then, at his ascension, Jesus instructed the disciples to baptize others. If we compare the relationship between the Mikvah bath as the ritual performed before entering the Temple and the relationship between baptism and becoming a Christian, then Baptism become the ritual we do as we enter a life long relationship with Jesus. Jesus said that the “Temple would be destroyed in three days and raised again.” With his death, he becomes the Temple and so it makes sense that Baptism is the ritual bath we take as our entry into the “Temple” (Christ).

*The Scriptural Basis:*

* John predicts that Jesus will baptize with water and spirit. (Matthew 3:11)
* Jesus is baptized by John. (Matthew 3:13-17)
* Jesus tells his disciples to go and baptize in his name at his ascension. (Matthew 28: 16-20)
* Paul explains that in baptism we form one body in Christ. (I Corinthians 12:13)

**The Ritual**

Supplies:

A pitcher of water

A bowl or baptism font to pour the water in

A shell (with pin glued on back)

The Bible

Say: Today we are going to have a very special ritual where those of us who have been baptized will remember their baptisms and those who have not been baptized will anticipate (or look forward to) their baptisms.

I want to begin by telling you the story of the day when Jesus was baptized. (Tell the story).

In the Bible it says: (Open the Bible to Matthew 3:16-17 and read it)

*And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.****17****And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+3:11-17" \l "fen-NRSV-23210c)] with whom I am well pleased.”*

On the day when Jesus was baptized, God was pleased. God was happy! And guess what? On the day that you were baptized, God was pleased and happy! Very pleased and very happy!!!

And for those of you have not been baptized, on the day when you are baptized, guess what? God will be pleased and happy! Very pleased and very happy!!

When we baptize people, we often use a shell as a symbol. Do you know why? I mean there were not shells in the River Jordan. We use the shell because something precious forms in shells. Do you know what forms in shells? (Let them guess.)

Yes, pearls… grow inside shells and pearls are VERY precious!! We use a shell at Baptism to remind us that each of us is precious to God. Even more precious than a pearl!

Now, we are going to do a *Ritual of Remembering and Anticipating our Baptisms*. We are going to enter a time of sacred silence while I pour water into this bowl/font. And then, one at a time, I want you to come forward and take a shell pin, and dip it into the water.

(Pour the water in silence and motion for the children to come to the water. As they dip their shell in the water say: (Name), Remember (or anticipate for those who have not been baptized) your baptism and never forget that you are precious to God.

After all of the children have done the ritual, say:

I want you to keep your pin and wear it as often as you like. And each time you wear it, I want you to remember how precious you are to God. For on the day you were baptized God was very pleased and very happy. God loves you. You are a blessing!

Optional: You can also invite them to wear them whenever there is a baptism at church. You could send out an email reminder each time one is happening.

*A Few Extra Ideas:*

1) You can do this ritual on Baptism of Christ Sunday, or each time that there is a baptism, or as often as you would like. Celebrating our baptisms never gets old!

2) Invite church members to bring shells that you can use at the *Baptism remembrance/anticipation Ritual.* You can hot glue pins to the backs of the small shells and use the large shells to baptize with. It then becomes a special keepsake.

3) Invite families and congregation members to collect water in a small bottle from their summer vacation and bring it to church for the ritual. Prior to the ritual invite them to bring their water forward and fill the bowl or font with waters from all over the country and world. Remind the children that people from all places and all countries receive Baptism. \*This idea is from Rev. Dr. Jim White. I was attending his church and saw this water ritual done… it was powerful! They then bottled the water and used it all year for Baptisms.