Man Named Jesus Baptized in Jordan

By John, the Preacher and Baptizer

SPECIAL REPORT, around 24 CE—A remarkable event took place recently in the Jordan Valley where John the Baptist has been preaching.

A man named Jesus suddenly appeared and asked John to baptize him. As the man was coming up out of the water, the heavens opened, a dove alighted upon him, and a voice was heard to say, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

John the Baptist has a reputation as a kind of eccentric prophet, no doubt because of his unusual appearance and outrageous preaching. Even though his father was a priest of the temple, John has chosen to live in the wilderness, eating locusts and wild honey. He wears a shirt made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist.

He has recently been heard calling the Pharisees and Sadducees—Jewish religious leaders—“a brood of vipers.” He then threatened that God would cut them down like trees. He has been urging everyone who comes within hearing distance to repent of their sins and be baptized.

John Speaks of One to Come

John has also foretold the coming of another, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John was heard to say that he would be unworthy even to carry the sandals of the one who is to come after him.

Some have speculated that this Jesus, who was baptized by John today, is the one John was talking about.

We were able to speak to a person who was at the Jordan River for the baptism. He told us, “When Jesus entered the valley, John stopped preaching and the whole place seemed uncharacteristically silent.

Continued on page 2
John the Baptist Lived in Simple Way

John the Baptist was born to Elizabeth and Zechariah just six months before the birth of Jesus. He is considered to be a cousin of Jesus. Before John's birth, the angel Gabriel told his father that the child would grow up as a person filled with the Holy Spirit. He would not drink wine or other strong drink. After John was born, Zechariah told the people that his son would be "the prophet of the Most High" and would go before the Lord to prepare the way.

To fulfill his mission, John spent many years in the wilderness, living a simple life. He lived off the land, eating what was available—locusts and wild honey. These foods were often eaten by the poor people of the Jordan Valley. Locusts, an abundant insect in the area, were roasted on a stick over an open fire.

John's dress also showed his natural life style. He wore a tunic woven of camel's hair, and a leather belt.

Message Declared

The message John preached was strong and direct: "Prepare the way of the Lord. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." John called out to the people to repent of their sins and be washed clean in the Jordan River. As they came forward, they knelt in the shallow water and confessed their sins while John stood by. At some point, John would baptize them either by immersing them in water or pouring water over them.

John was doing what he always did, preaching the kingdom of God and calling people to repentance, when Jesus came before him to be baptized.

After Jesus' baptism, John continued to preach enthusiastically until he was arrested and beheaded by Herod, who perceived him as a threat.

Jesus approached John and asked to be baptized.

"John replied, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'"

"Jesus must have persuaded John, for the baptism then took place. Jesus knelt before John in the shallow water. He was then immersed in the water for what seemed like a long time. When he came up out of the water, the sky suddenly opened up. A dove gently descended upon his head. Then a voice like thunder said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'"

"The people were stunned and remained silent as Jesus walked away toward the wilderness of the Jordan Valley. When he was out of sight, the river bank was alive with excitement and amazement.'"
Doves Are Symbols of the Holy Spirit

Doves appear often in the Bible, from Genesis onward. A dove bearing an olive leaf assured Noah that it would soon be safe to leave the ark after the flood.

Doves are mentioned many times in the Hebrew Scriptures. We can read of their mournful cooing, and of their nesting habits in caves and rock clefts.

The dove is also used as a term of endearment and reflects gentleness and beauty in the loved one. In Jewish lore, a dove is often a symbol of sincerity.

Doves, without blemish, were offered as sacrifices at the temple. Mary and Joseph offered two turtle doves at Mary’s purification after the birth of Jesus. This was required by Jewish law.

All four authors of the Gospels use the image of the dove descending at the time of Jesus’ baptism. So this bird has come to stand for the gentle descent of the Holy Spirit on individuals when they are baptized into the Christian family.

A dove with an olive branch in its mouth has come to mean peace.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

Do you believe in God the Father?
I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary,
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Puzzle Solution

From Shell Year-Intermediate, Episcopal Children's Curriculum
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JESUS’ BAPTISM

Directions: Use the words below to fill in the blanks in the sentences. When all the blanks are filled in use the letters in the numbered spaces to find the hidden message.

dove came baptized
Galilee repentance voice worthy
sandsals descended heavens

1. John _______ _______ _______ _______ people in the Jordan River.

2. He urged everyone to seek _______ _______ _______ _______.

3. John said, “I am not _______ _______ _______ to carry his _______ _______ _______.

4. Jesus _______ _______ _______ _______ to John at the Jordan.

5. When Jesus was baptized, the _______ _______ _______ _______ were opened.

6. The Spirit of God _______ _______ _______ _______ like a _______.

7. A _______ _______ _______ from heaven spoke.

Unit III: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Matthew 3:11, 16, 17
Session 2: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8
Session 3: Psalm 121:2; John 8:12; Acts 2:42
Session 4: Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:4-6
Session 5: Romans 15:5; 7
Session 6: Matthew 20:28; John 13:15
Session 7: John 14:1, 6; 15:13
Session 8: John 20:29b; I Corinthians 15:21; II Corinthians 5:17
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

Session 1
“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” —Matthew 3:11 (NRSV)

“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.” —Matthew 3:16 (NRSV)

“And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’” —Matthew 3:17 (NRSV)
‘Followers of the Way’ Share Details About Recent Easter Baptismal Service

ROME, around 65 CE—At a recent Easter celebration, held by Followers of the Way in the area, several citizens of Rome were initiated into the Christian community. We spoke to some of them about their experience.

Septimus, a young nobleman and his family, were part of the group. He told us, "Becoming a Christian was the most significant thing I have ever done. I did not do it without much thought and careful consideration for myself and my family. Being a Christian in Rome is still a dangerous step to take.

"It has taken us a long time. We first began worshiping with the Followers of the Way three years ago. We heard them preach about Jesus the Christ and were drawn to their beliefs. We began to study their writings and attend the sessions of instruction.

"They were very careful to check out who I was and how I was related to the Roman government. Many officials try to become part of their groups just to expose them to their persecutors.

"Some members of our group had to change jobs after becoming Christians. That was certainly true if they worked for the pagan temples for example.

"During the three years, we have received instruction from the catechists, and we have shared in the charity work of the community. We have attended worship on the first day of the week, for the service of reading and preaching.

Act of Baptizing Described

Priscilla, a young person from outside the city, told us of the final preparation for the ceremony that took place at Easter.

She said, "We spent the last few days in prayer and meditation as we thought about the death of the Lord Jesus for our sins. The night before the celebration of Our Lord’s resurrection, we gathered for an all-night vigil. We alternated between prayer and instruction as we got ready for the step we were about to take.

"Just before dawn we were led to a place by the river. The candidates all laid aside their clothing and jewelry and entered the water. We turned to the west
Sign of the Cross Made at Baptism

The sign of the cross, made on the forehead of the newly baptized, is a physical act that links the cross of Christ with our experience of the risen Lord. Bishops and priests make the sign of the cross (sometimes with oil) on the foreheads of individuals at baptism, confirmation, and during healing services. This cross is made by using the thumb of the right hand. At Baptism they say, "... you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever."

The sign of the cross is made in a different way by members of the clergy when they are blessing the people or granting forgiveness of sins. The sign is done with the entire arm, hand extended, thumb in. A large cross is made in the air—first the vertical part and then the horizontal. This same form may be used to bless the bread and the wine during the Great Thanksgiving of the Eucharist.

A third form is used when individuals cross themselves. Using the right hand, perhaps with the thumb touching the first two fingers, a person makes the sign by touching the forehead, the diaphragm, the right shoulder, and the left shoulder. This can be done at a variety of times according to local customs. Some of these might be: when the priest is blessing the congregation, when the Trinity is named, at the end of the Creed, or before and after receiving the bread and wine at the Eucharist.

‘Followers’, Continued from page 1

and renounced Satan and his power over us.

"Then we all turned to face the rising sun. We were asked three questions. ‘Do you believe in God the Father? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?’ We answered each question with the words, ‘I believe.’ Then we were immersed three times in the flowing river.

"When we emerged the third time, the elders said, 'I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'"

We also spoke with a participant named Demas. He described what happened after the baptisms:

"As we came up out of the water, we were dressed in white garments and led to the place where the Followers were to worship that day. When we entered the room, we were greeted with the kiss of peace and joined in the people’s prayers.

"Our worship was full of joy because at last we were able to share with our Christian family in the Supper of Our Lord. We could now receive his most sacred body and blood, in the bread and wine. What a glorious way to celebrate his resurrection!"
Early Christians Gathered in Secret

In the years that followed Jesus' resurrection, the early Christians were called Followers of the Way. They attended synagogue and continued in the ancient Jewish practices. They also met on "the first day of the week" (Sunday) to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord. At these times, they would usually share food at an agape meal, or love feast.

As Christianity spread, more Gentiles (non-Jews) became believers. Christian worship took on a more formal structure. A group would meet in secret, usually in someone's home, to hear preaching of the Word, to pray, and to share in the Lord's Supper. Anyone who had not been baptized was asked to leave before the blessing and distribution of the bread and wine. (See the story on page 1.)

The forms of worship in The Book of Common Prayer (1979) seek to recapture the essence of the worship in the Early Church.

The Apostles' Creed Has Ancient Roots

In the Episcopal Church, the Apostles' Creed is said during Morning and Evening Prayer. It is also the foundation of The Baptismal Covenant used at every Service of Holy Baptism.

This is the oldest version of a creed used to profess the Christian faith. One legend says it may have been written in Jerusalem, by the Apostles themselves, before they departed on their journeys to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

The three parts of the Creed were probably developed from the three-fold formula used at baptism. Individuals were baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We find this formula in Matthew 28:19.

Three "Do you believe . . ." questions were asked of the persons about to be baptized—affirming their faith in the Trinity. Originally, the answers were simply—"I believe." The expansion of the answers—into what we know as the Apostles' Creed—is an ancient profession of faith from the early church in Rome.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

Do you believe in God the Father?
I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the
Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of
the Father.
He will come again to judge the living
and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

ANSWERS

See The Book of
Common Prayer,
page 96.
THE APOSTLES' CREED

Directions: Fill in the blanks to complete the words of the Creed. See if you can do it from memory.

I ____ in God, the Father ____,
____ of heaven and earth.

I believe in ____ ____, his only Son, our Lord.
   He was conceived by the ____ of the Holy Spirit
   and born of the _____ _____
   He ____ under Pontius Pilate,
       was ____ , died, and was buried.
   He descended to the ____
   On the _____ day he rose again.
   He ____ into heaven,
       and is seated at the _____ _____ of the Father.
   He will come again to _____ the living and the _____.

I believe in the ____ ______,
   the holy ____ Church,
   the communion of ____,
   the _____ of sins,
   the _____ of the body,
   and the life ______. Amen.

Unit III:
LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Matthew 3:11, 16, 17
Session 2: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8
Session 3: Psalm 121:2; John 8:12; Acts 2:42
Session 4: Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:4-6
Session 5: Romans 15:5, 7
Session 6: Matthew 20:28; John 13:15
Session 7: John 14:1, 6; 15:13
Session 8: John 20:29b;
   I Corinthians 15:21;
   II Corinthians 5:17
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 2

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." —Matthew 28:19 (NRSV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." —Acts 1:8 (NRSV)
Church School Students Serve at Center
In Response to The Baptismal Covenant

Some students from Christ Church have been spending their afternoons at a local service center called Ruth's Place. Here, they gather under the guidance of the day care staff to play with the young children. We asked one of the students about what they are doing.

Sarah, a sixth grader, told us, "We began this work because of some conversations we had on Sunday at church. We have been studying the Baptismal Covenant from The Book of Common Prayer. When we started talking about the promises we make in the Covenant, we asked ourselves, 'How can we actually—in real life—do this?'

'The first promise seems easy. We can continue in the apostles' teaching and the breaking of the bread by going to church with our families, and to our church school class.

'The second, about resisting evil, is not really easy, but we can certainly do our best to keep it. We can help one another and remind ourselves that God forgives us when we confess what we have done wrong. Sometimes we are glad for all the help we can get.

'The third promise about proclaiming by word and example the Good News of Christ—well, that is always a challenge for us. We can write letters to students in other countries and tell them what we are learning about the Bible.

Serving Christ in Others

'The fourth question in the Covenant is the reason we come here to this day care center. We should seek and serve Christ in all persons. When we heard about the girls and boys here, we all said we wanted to help."

Mrs. Mary Blackwood, director of the center, told us what the students have been doing. She said, "The children at this day care center come from homes in an area that is very poor. Many of their families

Continued on page 2
What Does It Mean to Be Christians?

Being a Christian is not always an easy thing. The early Christians who were persecuted by the Romans knew how hard it was. But they shared the good news: Jesus, who had died for their sins, had risen from the dead. He was with them, and that made all the difference. They could bear hardship and still be joyful.

In some parts of the world today, people suffer and die for their religious beliefs.

What does it mean for us to live as Christians? We do not have the kinds of troubles many Christians have faced. Our life is easy by comparison. Still, we do need to think seriously about what makes us "Christian" in our daily work and play.

Being Christian is not a heavy burden to carry. We can be joyful as we place our trust in the Lord. We are set free to be our best selves.

We try our best to do what Jesus asks of us. But how do we know what that is?

One way we can find out is to read the Bible. In the Gospels, Jesus tells us to "love one another," just as he has loved us. He also tells us to "love our neighbors as ourselves."

If we truly love ourselves, we will take good care of our bodies—eating the right foods, getting exercise, staying away from dangerous situations, and knowing what to do in emergencies.

Loving others can mean at least the following:

• being kind to people who are unkind or mean to us;
• recognizing situations that aren’t right and fair, then trying to do something to make things better—such as working to clean up the environment, and collecting food and clothing for the poor;
• staying away from drugs and other things that are harmful.

Staying Close to Our Lord

To love others as ourselves requires that we stay close to Jesus Christ. Christians understand how important it is to come together for worship and prayer.

As members of the Church, we pray for persons we love and for others we may not know. Again and again, we ask God to forgive us when we do wrong, and to help us do better.

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Students, Continued from page 1

share an apartment with two or more other families. The parents have very little money, and most are out of work at least part of the year.

"Ruth’s Place was established by the churches in the area to care for these people. We serve hot meals, provide basic medical care, and look after these preschoolers while their parents work or look for jobs.

"The center always needs help, as all the workers are volunteers. I was delighted when the students in my church school class said they wanted to do something to help out here. Some, like Sarah, work with the children. Others help serve meals and unpack medical supplies."

We asked Mrs. Blackwood about the questions and promises of the Baptismal Covenant that Salah had told us about.

She said, "The students have really been struggling with how they could live as Christians. We have lots of interesting conversations, and they offer many good ideas. We still have one more question in the Covenant to work on. It’s the one about striving for peace and justice and respecting all human beings. I can’t wait to see what they do with that!"
Many of the prayers we say and the hymns we sing express our call to go out into the world and share God's love with others.

The famous Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833) offers examples of how we could live our lives as Christians. It asks God to help us live as St. Francis did: loving those who hate us, and helping those who are unhappy, sad, or lonely, to find hope in Jesus Christ. A version of this prayer is set to music in The Hymnal 1982, 593.

Another hymn that speaks to us of the Christian life is “Go forth for God; go to the world in peace” (347). It tells us to go out into the world in peace, love, strength, and joy to serve God's people. We are to help those who are weak and sick, to treat everyone we meet with kindness.

A Prayer attributed to St. Francis
Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

—The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From

THE BAPTIMSMAL COVENANT

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I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the
Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of
the Father.
He will come again to judge the living
and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

PASCHAL CANDLE

Shell Year—Intermediate, Episcopal Children's Curriculum
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Directions: Find the words to fill in the blanks, and put them in the word chain. The last letter of each of the four answers is the first letter of the next. The Baptismal Covenant will help you solve this puzzle.

1. I will continue in the apostles' teaching and _____.
2. I will continue in _____.
3. I will _____ _____.
4. I will _____ _____ _____.

Unit III:
LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Matthew 3:11, 16, 17
Session 2: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8
Session 3: Psalm 121:2; John 8:12; Acts 2:42
Session 4: Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:4-6
Session 5: Romans 15:5, 7
Session 6: Matthew 20:28; John 13:15
Session 7: John 14:1, 6; 15:13
Session 8: John 20:29b; I Corinthians 15:21; II Corinthians 5:17
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 3

“My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”
—Psalm 121:2 (NRSV)

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’
—John 8:12 (NRSV)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” —Acts 2:42 (NRSV)
Students Are Baptized After Time Spent Studying in Their Church School Class

Last Sunday at All Saints Episcopal Church, Jason and Elizabeth Evans were baptized. Jason and Elizabeth are 11-year-old twins who began attending All Saints with their parents just a year ago. In their church school class, they began studying the Bible and The Book of Common Prayer, to learn more about what it means to be a Christian.

At the Easter Vigil in the spring, they witnessed the baptism of several adults and infants. Elizabeth told us, “After the Easter celebration, Jason and I asked our parents about our own baptisms. When we discovered that we had never been baptized, we asked the priest at All Saints to baptize us. She arranged the service for last Sunday.

“Our parents, godparents, and the people of All Saints were all there. In the service, we welcomed into the family of God. After church we went to a reception in the parish hall.”

Unforgettable Service

Jason described their experience. “It was a very exciting day,” he said. “We have been waiting for several weeks. We had talked a lot with our church school teacher, our parents, and the priest about what being baptized meant.

“This morning we put on our best clothes and came to church early. We had a rehearsal the night before, but we wanted to walk through it one more time. We were glad to see everything again before the service started. Then we took our places in the pew.

“When it was time we stood at the baptismal font with our parents and godparents. The godparents were friends of our parents whom we met when we first came here last year.

“As the service began, the priest asked if we wanted to be baptized. Each of us said, ‘I do.’”

Elizabeth took up the story. “We repeated the answers to The Baptismal Covenant with everyone else. After prayers for us and the Thanksgiving over the water, we stepped up to the font. The priest said, ‘Elizabeth, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ The same thing was said for Jason.

“Then we were sealed by the Holy Spirit. The priest made the sign of the cross on our foreheads, and marked as Christ’s own forever. I will never forget that!

“After the peace, everyone hugged and kissed us. Jason didn’t like that a whole lot. But people were so nice. Then we began the Great Thanksgiving. For the first time, Jason and I could receive Holy
Church Members Share Baptism Stories

We interviewed several other people who took part in the celebration of Jason and Elizabeth’s baptism. First, we talked with the rector of All Saints, the priest who baptized the twins.

The rector began, “Holy Baptism is one of the two great sacraments in the Episcopal Church. This sacrament had its beginning when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.

“At Jesus’ ascension into heaven, he told his disciples to go into all the world and baptize people in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The church has been baptizing new members ever since.

“In the early church, the new Christians were mostly adults who went through a long process of preparation, sometimes for three years. Later, whole families were baptized at the same time, and children were considered Christians just as their parents were. As generations passed, infants were baptized soon after their birth.

“Sometimes, if parents grow up in another faith tradition or have not attended church, they do not have their children baptized. When these families decide to become members of the Episcopal Church, we baptize both the adults and the children.

“A baptism involves a public commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. When infants are baptized, their parents and sponsors promise to bring them up so that they will later make such a confession of faith for themselves. All baptized persons are full members of the Episcopal Church and can receive Holy Communion.”

We also talked with the parents of a new baby, who was recently baptized at All Saints. The mother told us, “Having our child baptized was something we thought about before she was born. We went to classes for parents so we would know how to raise our little girl in a Christian home. We learned about the promises we would make at her baptism, and about reaffirming our own baptismal promises through the words of The Baptismal Covenant.

“The classes helped us to think about our own practices as Christians. We decided to read the Bible and pray together at home, so our daughter would grow up seeing us do these things. We are lucky to be part of a worshipping community that accepts us as a family and welcomes our child.”

An adult who was baptized at the recent Easter Vigil, shared his experience with us. “I was not baptized as an infant because my parents belonged to a different tradition. In their church, only those old enough to make their own confession of faith—mostly older teens or adults—are baptized. I never felt strong enough to do that as I was growing up.

“When I left home, I stopped going to church for awhile. Friends invited me to come to this church with them, a few years ago. At first I just came to the service on Sunday mornings. Then I began to attend the Bible study class and to read the Bible and The Book of Common Prayer at home.

“Last year I decided to attend the classes for those considering joining the church. I found out that the first step was being baptized. When I read about the early church and the tradition of being baptized at the Easter Vigil, I decided I wanted to do that and asked to be baptized with the others in my class. It was the most important day of my life.”

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Students, Continued from page 1

Communion. We are really a part of God’s family now.”

We asked Jason and Elizabeth what happens next. They told us they were happy to continue learning in the Church. When they are older, and ready to do so, they want to be confirmed. Their parents are also thinking about being confirmed in the Episcopal Church. They are currently taking classes to prepare for Confirmation the next time the Bishop visits All Saints.
What Godparents and Sponsors Promise

Why do we have godparents and sponsors for people when they are baptized?

For infants, the godparents are selected by the parents and may be relatives or Christian friends who agree to help the parents raise the children in a Christian environment. This means that they may help to teach the child about the love of God and to see that the children grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Godparents have a really important job to do and should prayerfully consider this before they agree.

Sometimes, godparents send cards and letter to their godchildren, and remember their “baptismal birthdays” each year.

The term “sponsor” is used for a person who agrees to present a candidate for baptism. They are usually friends of the person to be baptized and are baptized Christians themselves. A sponsor’s role is to support a newly-baptized person through prayer and by their own example of living a Christian life.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
I will, with God’s help.
Find the following words in the word search on the left. All the words have something to do with Baptism.

- Baptismal Covenant
- Baptize
- Name
- Resurrection
- Paschal
- Water
- Sanctify
- Font
- Faith
- Marked
- Creation
- Anointed
- Forgiveness
- Sacrament
- Believe
- Promise
- Oil
- New
- Christ
- Savior
- Father
- Chrism
- Life
- Prayers
- Son
- Candle
- Sin
- Consecrate
- Holy Spirit
- Communion
- Sealed
- Jesus

Unit III: Learning Scripture

Session 1: Matthew 3:11, 16, 17
Session 2: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8
Session 3: Psalm 121:2; John 8:12; Acts 2:42
Session 4: Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:4-6
Session 5: Romans 15:5, 7
Session 6: Matthew 20:28; John 13:15
Session 7: John 14:1, 6; 15:13
Session 8: John 20:29b; I Corinthians 15:21; II Corinthians 5:17
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

Session 4

"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.'—Acts 2:38 (NRSV)

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."—Ephesians 4:4-6 (NRSV)
Church Has Large Party to Welcome Newly-Baptized Persons of All Ages

St. John’s Episcopal Church was the scene of a marvelous celebration on Sunday as the congregation welcomed twelve new members.

New people arrive at St. John’s quite often. All are welcomed and invited to join other members of the congregation in fellowship, Bible study, and worship. Last Sunday’s schedule was different because it included a party for those people who were newly baptized into the Christian community.

We talked to Michael and Rachel Banks who were in charge of this event. “Each year,” Michael said, “the church baptizes new members on certain feast days—the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the First Sunday after Epiphany), the Easter Vigil, the Day of Pentecost, and All Saints’ Sunday. Usually there are just one or two candidates, often children, who are baptized.

“On these occasions, because of the joy of their children’s baptisms, parents plan parties for their families. The congregation helps by providing cakes as gifts to mark these events.

“This last time was so wonderful. Not only did we have babies being baptized but several older children and adults—twelve in all—who were received as members of God’s family.

Everyone Included

Rachel continued, “With twelve newly-baptized members, the hospitality committee decided to have a special celebration to welcome all these individuals into the community.

“Everyone was eager to help—adults, youth, and children. We decorated the parish hall with balloons, ribbons and streamers, and doves. Some people brought flowers from their gardens and arranged them on tables around the room. A few bakers among the group volunteered to make a huge cake. They decorated it with all the names of the persons who were baptized.

“We made sure the families of all the candidates knew about the event ahead of time, so they would be able to be present; but we tried to keep it a secret from the
Baptizing May Be Done by Immersion

The rubrics or rules for performing the sacrament of Holy Baptism include these instructions: “Each candidate is presented by name to the Celebrant, . . . who then immerses, or pours water upon the candidate, . . .” (The Book of Common Prayer, page 307.)

Immersion is the ancient means of baptizing people into the community of faith. Many Christian churches still use only this method. People who are to be baptized are sometimes immersed in a large indoor tank or pool called a baptistery. Some baptisms occur outdoors, in a lake, river, or stream.

Immersion may be done three times—in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The process represents our dying and rising again to new life in Jesus Christ through our baptism.

Some Episcopal churches have moved in the direction of total immersion. For example, a church in Black Mountain, North Carolina, has built an outdoor pool for this purpose.

Most churches use a baptismal font.

The common practice is for fresh clean water to be poured in the font from a large pitcher. The person to be baptized stands or is held over the font, and the priest pours (not sprinkles) water over the head of the candidate three times, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

It should be evident to everyone that an abundant amount of water is used at a baptism.

Practices Vary in Christian Traditions

In other Christian traditions, Holy Baptism takes different forms as priests and ministers follow their churches’ prescribed rules.

For example, in Eastern Orthodox churches, a large copper baptismal tankard is used. The naked baby is submerged in the water three times, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In this Orthodox tradition, baptism and confirmation are completed at the same time. The newly-baptized baby receives the sacrament of Holy Communion immediately after the baptism during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. A special spoon is used to dip a small morsel of bread into the blessed wine. The tiny bit of bread soaked in the wine is then given to the baby. Children growing up in this tradition cannot remember a time when they did not take part in the Holy Eucharist.

‘Believer’ Baptisms

In the tradition of Baptist churches, infants are not baptized. Only those young persons and adults who can make their own public confession of faith in Christ receive baptism. These are called “believer” baptisms. Some churches that hold this conviction do not recognize the baptisms of other traditions.

The Episcopal Church regards all Christian baptisms performed in the Name of the Trinity to be “forever.” Once a person is baptized, no matter where the event took place, he or she is considered a member of God’s family (household).

Persons baptized in other traditions may be received into the Episcopal Church by “reaffirmation” (The Book of Common Prayer, page 309).

Baptism means full initiation into the Church with all the rights granted to its members, including participation in the Holy Eucharist.

Welcome, Continued from page 1

newly-baptized persons.

“It was such a surprise to all of them! When they entered the parish hall after the service and saw everything we had done, they could hardly believe it. They all thanked us warmly and told us that they really felt they are now a part of the family of our church as well as the family of God. Many had tears in their eyes as they expressed their joy.

“The members of the committee were overwhelmed by the response—both the newly baptized and the members of the congregation who came out to help. It really made us all feel like one great big family. It brought us closer together. The words of The Baptismal Covenant had an extra special meaning for all of us that day.”
How to Do Emergency Baptisms

In case of a serious emergency, anyone who is baptized may baptize another person. This usually happens only in situations where someone who has never been baptized could die at any time.

Using the given name of the person to be baptized and any available water, say, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Then say the Lord’s Prayer and other appropriate prayers. Afterward, it is important that a priest of the church be told about the baptism so that it can be recorded in the register.

If the person recovers, he or she should be recognized at a service of Holy Baptism that includes everything except the administration of the water.

Baptism Gave Water a New Meaning

Water, one of the most basic elements for the sustaining of life, has had meaning for the people of God from the very beginning. God created the waters of the earth on the second day. The people of God were led out of Egypt, by Moses, through the waters of the Red Sea. For the Hebrew people, water was for cleansing and for purification. It was at Jesus’ baptism that water became the means of cleansing one from sin and being born again in the new life of Jesus Christ.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
I will, with God’s help.
Using the clues below, find the words regarding baptism and solve the puzzle.

1. The words of The Baptismal Covenant are also in the ________.

2. Every member of the congregation is a ____________.

3. Holy Baptism is a rite of Christian ________.

4. Oil blessed by the Bishop and used to make the sign of the cross.

5. The Service of Holy Baptism takes place within the ________.

6. A baptized person who presents someone else for baptism is called a ____________.

7. The clergy person who presides at the service.

8. The person to be baptized is a ________.

9. The act of making the sign of the cross on the person's forehead at baptism.

10. When an infant is baptized, ________ present the child.

Unit III: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Matthew 3:11, 16, 17
Session 2: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8
Session 3: Psalm 121:2; John 8:12; Acts 2:42
Session 4: Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:4-6
Session 5: Romans 15:5, 7
Session 6: Matthew 20:28; John 13:15
Session 7: John 14:1, 6; 15:13
Session 8: John 20:29b; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 5

"May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus." —Romans 15:5 (NRSV)

"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." —Romans 15:7 (NRSV)
Jesus Puzzled His Disciples Last Night At Private Supper Held in Local Home

Last evening, Jesus and his disciples met for a private meal in the upper room of a local citizen's home. Their gathering proved to be quite unusual.

One of the disciples spoke to us about what happened. He said, "We were all at the table when Jesus got up and took off his outer robe. He then tied a towel around himself and filled a basin with water."

"We watched in amazement as our Master and Teacher began to wash our feet and to wipe them with the towel."

"When it was his turn, Peter asked, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'"

"Jesus responded, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'"

"Peter continued to protest, but Jesus insisted. Finally, Peter gave in and asked to have his head and hands washed as well. Jesus said that only his feet needed to be washed."

"Jesus then continued to wash the feet of everyone in that room. When he was finished, he put his robe back on and returned to the table."

"Then he asked us, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. I have set for you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.' Jesus went on to tell us that we were to treat others as if we were their servants.

Betrayal Predicted
"When Jesus finished speaking about what it means to be a servant, he suddenly looked troubled and sad."

"Then he made a surprising and unsettling statement: 'One of you will betray me.' Jesus seemed to know who this person would be. We all looked carefully at one another. Most of us had been together for three years. We all loved Jesus. Who

Continued on page 2
Foot Washing Was a Common Practice

In the days of Jesus, most people wore sandals. Leather shoes were expensive and usually were not sturdy enough for outdoor wear. Because sandals exposed feet to the dust and dirt of the unpaved streets, people would take off their shoes on entering a house and would have their feet washed as an act of hospitality.

Large, specially-designed basins of stone or pottery were placed near the entrance of the door. The visitors would place their feet, one at a time, on a small brace molded in the center of the basin, while the host’s servant bathed them. Feet were wiped with a towel.

Would betray him?

“I saw Simon Peter lean toward the disciple who was sitting closest to Jesus. That disciple asked Jesus something that I did not hear. Nor did I hear Jesus’ reply.

“Right after that, Jesus dipped a piece of bread in the dish. He handed the bread to Judas and said, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’

“We asked one another what was going on, but no one seemed to know. Some thought it had to do with Judas’ job as treasurer of the group. Anyway, Judas left at once and seemed to be in a hurry.

“We remained in the upper room for quite some time after that. Jesus spoke to us about many things. It was as if he had to tell us as much as possible before it was too late—as if we wouldn’t have any more time together.

“It was late at night when he finished. We left the house and went out to the garden to pray.”

Annual Passover Meal Celebrated Freedom

According to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Last Supper took place in connection with the traditional Passover meal (seder). The story in John’s Gospel differs by one day but places the meal within the week of the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread when special foods would have been served.

The Passover supper always reminded God’s people of the trials and hardships they endured while they were slaves in Egypt. They gave thanks for God’s precious gift of freedom.

The Festival is called Passover because of what happened on the night before the Hebrews left Egypt. The “angel of death” passed over their houses when the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed.

In preparation for the meal, a lamb was taken to the temple by the male members of the family. There it was slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the base of the altar.

The lamb was then roasted and served at the meal with unleavened bread, bitter herbs, wine, and fruit. During the meal the father would ask questions of younger members of the family. The story of the Exodus was told as the people relived the events once again.

Holy Week Includes Solemn Services

Holy Week is the most important week of the Church Year for Christians. During this week we remember the last few days of Jesus’ ministry on earth and prepare ourselves for the glorious Easter event. The quietness and solemnity of the week make the joyous celebration of Easter all the more wonderful.

We begin with Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday). Palms are blessed and distributed to the congregation. If possible, the people go into the church in a procession.

The Gospel reading for the day is the Passion narrative from Matthew, chs. 26-27; Mark, chs. 14-15; or Luke, chs. 22-23.
HOLY WEEK
Continued from page 2

Supper, Jesus gave a new commandment to his disciples—to love one another.

A ceremony of foot washing may be included in the service, following the reading of the Gospel. It illustrates the act of servanthood demonstrated by Jesus at the Last Supper.

At the end of worship, the altar is stripped of all hangings and other ornaments. It is washed and left bare for Good Friday.

Following the service, some people may stay to keep watch through the night. This vigil represents the time in the garden before Jesus’ arrest. It is a time of silent prayer and meditation.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From
THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

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Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
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Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
I will, with God’s help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
I will, with God’s help.
Across
2. Jesus poured water into a _____.
4. Jesus ____ the disciples’ feet.
6. Jesus filled the role of a _____.
8. Jesus gave his followers an _____. (John 13:15.)
10. The disciples called Jesus ____ and Lord.
12. Jesus would soon depart and return to his _____.
14. Jesus girded himself with a _____.
15. The disciples were not all _____. for one would betray Jesus. (John 13:11.)

Down
1. Absence of pride; the act of being humble.
3. Jesus’ final meal with his disciples: Last _____.
5. Twelve ____ followed Jesus.
7. The Jews had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of the _____.
9. Jesus washed the disciples’ _____.
11. _____ is used for cleansing.
13. _____ did not want Jesus to wash his feet at first.

Unit III: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

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Session 6: Matthew 20:28; John 13:15
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Session 8: John 20:29b; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING
SCRIPTURE

Session 6

“... just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” —Matthew 20:28 (NRSV)

(Jesus said,) “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” —John 13:15 (NRSV)
Witnesses Offer Full Details of Arrest, Trial, and Death of Jesus the Nazarene

The followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in shock today as the news of his crucifixion became widely known.

Jesus’ arrest took place late last night or early this morning, in the Garden of Gethsemane. An eyewitness told us what happened today:

“I was hiding in the garden when Jesus and his disciples arrived. I watched while they prayed. Some of them fell asleep. I guess I did, too, until I heard the sound of many feet approaching the entrance to the garden.

“I stood up then in my hiding place and peered out to see what was going on. A man walked up to Jesus. It was one of the disciples. I had seen him with the group at other times. He kissed Jesus. Then there was a loud commotion, and one of the disciples attacked a soldier with a sword. His ear was cut off.

“Jesus said, ‘No more of this!’ He touched the soldier’s ear, and it was healed. The soldiers seized Jesus and took him away.’

We learned later that Jesus was questioned by the Jewish council and condemned.

This morning Jesus was brought before Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate questioned him, declared him not guilty, and sent him to Herod. Neither Pilate nor Herod could find enough evidence to sentence Jesus to death, but the high priest and the rulers demanded that Jesus be crucified.

An observer said, “It was terrible. We were standing at the edge of the crowd in the plaza trying to see what was going on. Suddenly, the crowd called out, ‘Crucify him.’

“We waited for what seemed like a long time. Then we saw Jesus being led away outside the city. He was carrying a heavy cross. We followed the awful procession as it slowly made its way to the hill called Golgotha. Jesus fell several times, and he was bleeding from many wounds on his body. For a while another man carried the cross.

“Many people who stood along the road were crying and weeping.

Final Hours

“At the third hour of the day, the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They put a sign above his head that said, ‘The King of the Jews.’

“Three hours later, the sky became dark. At the ninth hour, Jesus called out in anguish, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

At the hour of Jesus’ death, many strange things occurred at other locations around the city. The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. No one claims to know anything about the incident. Many people reported seeing tombs opened, rocks split, and the bodies of the dead raised.

We believe Jesus is to be buried quickly in an as-yet-undisclosed location.
Passion Story Is Read on Good Friday

Good Friday is the day Jesus was crucified and buried. In the Church, it is traditionally a day of fasting and penance.

No celebration of the Eucharist takes place on this day, although the reserved sacrament may be administered to the people at the Good Friday service. Some churches have a three-hour service that lasts from noon until three o'clock, the hours Jesus spent on the cross. Other services may be held in the evening.

The altar has been left bare after the Maundy Thursday service when everything was removed. Crosses that could not be taken away were covered with sheer black cloth. The clergy are usually dressed in black cassocks without surplices or stoles.

The Good Friday liturgy begins in silence, as the priest enters. Everyone then kneels for silent prayer. The service begins with the Collect of the Day. The Scripture readings include The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John, which may be read by one person or by several persons to whom different parts are assigned. The congregation shouts the words of the crowd.

The congregation remains seated during the reading, until the verse that tells of the arrival at Golgotha (John 19:17). Then everyone stands.

The Solemn Collects and three Anthems follow the sermon. The service may end here with the Lord’s Prayer and a closing prayer, or it may continue with the distribution of the Holy Communion. The service ends as it began—in silence.

In some churches a wooden cross or crucifix may be brought into the church and placed in the sight of the people. Some members of the congregation may wish to remain in the church for silent prayer and meditation following the service.

Tracing the Way of the Cross

Jesus probably faced Pontius Pilate at the Antonia Fortress, just north of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. From here, he would have been forced to carry the crossbar of the cross through the streets of Jerusalem.

It was about a third of a mile from the Roman fort to the hill called Golgotha where the crucifixion is said to have taken place. This was not a particularly long distance. However, Jesus was weak from lack of sleep, the stress and tension of the interrogations he had endured, and the beatings and whippings he had received from the soldiers. So it must have seemed extremely hard to carry the cross that far.

Jesus fell three times on the way to the place of execution. A woman named Veronica may have wiped his face with her handkerchief. Other women wept bitterly, and Jesus spoke to them.

When they reached Golgotha, Jesus was stripped of his garments and nailed to the cross, where he died three hours later.
Pilgrims Follow Stations of the Cross

In Jerusalem, pilgrims often follow an annual tradition of offering prayers at a series of places in the city that are associated with Jesus' trials on the day of his death. This pilgrimage and devotion is known as The Way of the Cross.

The number of stations has changed over the centuries. Fourteen are included in The Book of Occasional Services. Eight of these are based on Gospel accounts. Six are based on inferences from the Gospels or on legend.

When churches use the stations of the cross in their buildings, they may be marked by simple crosses with numbers carved in them, simple drawings or carvings on wooden plaques, or elaborately-painted icons.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

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Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
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Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
I will, with God's help.

Puzzle Answers
1. Judas
2. Gethsemane
3. Caiphas
4. Malchus
5. Peter
6. Pilate
7. Gabbatha
8. Barabbas
9. Golgotha
10. Jerusalem
Unscramble the words below and match them to the clues provided. The people and places are connected with the events of Good Friday. All but one of the words can be found in John, chs. 18-19.

**Scrambled Words**

- REPTE
- SURLAJEEM
- DUISA
- RABBSAAB
- BATHGABA
- TILEPA
- PHACASIA
- SUCAMLH
- TOLGAHOG
- MATHSENEG

**Clues:**

1. The disciple who betrayed Jesus.
2. The garden where Jesus was arrested.
3. The high priest who questioned Jesus.
4. The soldier whose ear was cut off.
5. The disciple who denied Jesus.
6. The Roman governor.
7. Hebrew name for the place called the Stone Pavement.
8. The prisoner who was released.
9. The hill where Jesus was crucified.
10. The city where these events took place.

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**Unit III: LEARNING SCRIPTURE**

**Session 1:** Matthew 3:11, 16, 17  
**Session 2:** Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8  
**Session 3:** Psalm 121:2; John 8:12; Acts 2:42  
**Session 4:** Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:4-6  
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**Session 6:** Matthew 20:28; John 13:15  
**Session 7:** John 14:1, 6; 15:13  
**Session 8:** John 20:29b; I Corinthians 15:21; II Corinthians 5:17  
**Session 9:** Review Sessions 1-8

**LEARNING SCRIPTURE**

**Session 7**

(Jesus said,) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." —John 14:1 (NRSV)

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" —John 14:6 (NRSV)

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." —John 15:13 (NRSV)
Followers of Crucified Teacher Claim He Has Now Been Raised from the Dead

An astounding event has reportedly occurred outside of Jerusalem. In the early morning hours of last Sunday, a woman named Mary Magdalene went to the garden where the tomb of the late prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, is located. She found the tomb empty.

We asked Mary to tell us what happened.

"I got up early on the first day of the week. I had the sad task of anointing the body of my Teacher and friend, Jesus. We had not been able to follow the required ritual of burial required of Jewish people because his death happened on the day of Preparation (for the sabbath).

"When I came to the tomb, the heavy stone that the soldiers had placed in front of it was rolled away. I was so frightened! I ran to get Peter and John. I just knew the Roman soldiers would be there and had..."

Is Jesus Living?

"I did not understand what had happened and stayed near the tomb weeping. In my distress, I thought maybe I was dreaming, so I bent to look into the tomb again, hoping against hope to see the body lying there. Instead I saw two angels in white. They spoke to me, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'"

"I cried, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' I turned around and saw a man standing in the garden. He asked me the same question, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' I repeated that I wanted to know where the body of my Lord was.

"Then the man spoke my name, 'Mary!' I knew then it was my Lord, my Teacher! It was Jesus!

"I reached out to put my arms around him, but he kept me away. He said, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father.' Then he vanished from my sight.

"I ran back to where the followers of Jesus had gathered. I pounded on the locked door and shouted to them, 'I have seen the Lord! I have seen the Lord!'"

Mary and the other followers of Jesus truly believe that Jesus has risen from the dead. Several others claim to have seen..."
We Share the Easter News with Symbols

"...the butterfly is a symbol of life, death, and resurrection."

**Lamb**. The symbol of a lamb has many meanings, both in Scripture and in the history of the Church. A lamb standing represents the risen Lord, who was sacrificed for our sins and who rose victorious over death. The lamb is often shown with a resurrection banner, a white flag with a red cross, supported by a silver staff with a gold cross.

**Pomegranate**. The pomegranate is a fruit with a reddish-yellow skin. It is full of seeds that burst forth when the fruit is opened. This fruit symbolizes the new life in Jesus Christ bursting forth from the tomb.

**Butterfly**. Because of its three stages of life (as caterpillar, chrysalis, and winged insect), the butterfly is a symbol of life, death, and resurrection. These stages represent a Christian believer's journey: the caterpillar—our life on earth; the chrysalis—our death and time in the grave; and the butterfly—our emergence as completely changed people in the glory of eternal life with God.

**Lily**. The lovely white lily that blooms at Easter has long been a symbol of this season. The bulb, which has been dormant and appears dead, springs to life in a beautiful flower.

**Peacock**. The peacock, a bird known for its beautiful blue-green coloring, loses its feathers only to grow new ones that are even more splendid than the ones lost. So will our lives in the risen Lord Jesus Christ be more glorious than anything we have ever known.

**Phoenix**. The phoenix is a mythical bird that resembles an eagle. It is said to live five hundred years. At its death, it is consumed by fire, but it rises again out of its own ashes, more beautiful than before. So this legendary bird has come to be a symbol for the resurrection—Christ's rising from death to new and everlasting life.
Mary Magdalene Was Extraordinary

Mary Magdalene had a very unusual life for a woman in her day. She was from Magdala, a small village in Galilee, where Jesus healed her of a form of mental illness.

She showed her gratitude and devotion to Jesus by following him wherever he traveled to carry on his ministry. This was regarded as scandalous behavior for a woman in first-century Palestine.

She accompanied Jesus on the last trip to Jerusalem and stood by him as he was nailed to the cross. She was at the foot of the cross weeping when he died.

Mary, either alone or with other women, was the first to see the risen Lord. She appears in all four Gospel accounts of the resurrection.

Mary risked scandal, and even death, to follow Jesus. She is an example of courage, faith, and devotion for all Christians.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

From THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

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Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
I will, with God's help.
EASTER MESSAGE

Follow the clues to discover the Easter message hidden in the words at right.

1. At the Easter Vigil we kindle a new fire. Cross out all the words that rhyme with fire.

2. We use the new fire to light the Paschal Candle. Cross out all the words that have a can in them.

3. We renew our Baptismal vows as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cross out all the words that have a v in them.

4. The colors of Easter are white and gold, just like the colors of the Easter lily. Cross out all the words that are names of flowers.

UNIT III: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Matthew 3:11, 16, 17
Session 2: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8
Session 3: Psalm 121:2; John 8:12; Acts 2:42
Session 4: Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:4-6
Session 5: Romans 15:5, 7
Session 6: Matthew 20:28; John 13:15
Session 7: John 14:1, 6; 15:13
Session 8: John 20:29b; I Corinthians 15:21; II Corinthians 5:17
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 8
"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."
—John 20:29b (RSV)

"For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ..." —I Corinthians 5:21 (RSV)

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" —II Corinthians 5:17 (RSV)
Followers of Crucified Teacher Claim He Has Now Been Raised from the Dead

An astounding event has reportedly occurred outside of Jerusalem. In the early morning hours of last Sunday, a woman named Mary Magdalene went to the garden where the tomb of the late prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, is located. She found the tomb empty.

We asked Mary to tell us what happened.

"I got up early on the first day of the week. I had the sad task of anointing the body of my Teacher and friend, Jesus. We had not been able to follow the required ritual of burial required of Jewish people because his death happened on the day of Preparation (for the sabbath).

"When I came to the tomb, the heavy stone that the soldiers had placed in front of it was rolled away. I was so frightened! I ran to get Peter and John. I just knew the Roman soldiers or the temple guard had taken the body away.

"We all ran back to the tomb. John got there first and looked inside. He saw the linen wrappings and was afraid to go farther. Peter, of course, went right in. John followed. Soon after, they left.

Is Jesus Living?

"I did not understand what had happened and stayed near the tomb weeping. In my distress, I thought maybe I was dreaming, so I bent to look into the tomb again, hoping against hope to see the body lying there. Instead I saw two angels in white. They spoke to me, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'

"I cried, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' I turned around and saw a man standing in the garden. He asked me the same question, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' I repeated that I wanted to know where the body of my Lord was.

"Then the man spoke my name, 'Mary!' I knew then it was my Lord, my Teacher! It was Jesus!

"I reached out to put my arms around him, but he kept me away. He said, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father.' Then he vanished from my sight.

"I ran back to where the followers of Jesus had gathered. I pounded on the locked door and shouted to them, 'I have seen the Lord! I have seen the Lord!'"

Mary and the other followers of Jesus truly believe that Jesus has risen from the dead. Several others claim to have seen him alive—walking, talking, and sharing bread with them.

The Roman authorities and the members of the Sanhedrin (the high Jewish rulers) are quietly distressed and skeptical about these events. As yet, they have declined to comment.
Boy Shares Story of How He Changed As a Friend Guided Him to a New Life

Thomas, an outstanding student at Central Elementary School, has just won the Mayor's Award. This is an honor given each year to the student at the school who shows the greatest improvement.

Two years ago, Thomas was in a special school for boys. He was failing at his studies and getting into fights with his classmates on a daily basis.

We wanted to find out what caused Thomas to change from that kind of behavior. Recently, in a quiet corner of his family's living room, he told us his story.

He began, "When I was two, my parents got a divorce. I don't remember seeing my dad ever again. My mom worked hard to take care of us. We lived with my grandparents."

"When I was five, my grandparents both got sick. My mom couldn't take care of them, so they went to live in a nursing home. They both died within a year. The nursing home cost a lot of money, and we had to sell my grandparents' house. We had no place to live, and my mom lost her job. She took me to stay with a friend of hers and never came back. By that time, I was seven years old."

"After that, I lived in many different homes. I was very angry at everybody. I wanted my mom, not all these other people. I got into fights at school. I didn't pay attention to the teachers. I ended up in that school for boys. It's a place where they put you when they don't know what else to do."

New Home, New Parents

"One of the counselors there was real neat. He seemed to understand why I was so angry. He tried to find my mom. We discovered that she had died in an accident right after she left me with her friend.

"Steve is a great guy. He helped me figure out why I was so mad at everybody. We talked a lot. One day he brought this other man to see me. I thought he was another counselor. We got along great. It turned out that he was a friend of Steve's from his church. He and his wife were interested in adopting a boy like me."

"That's how I got here, two years ago. This is their house—my new parents. They are terrific. I have my own room and a new bike. We go to church on Sunday. I play ball on the church team."

"Last year, I was baptized. Steve is one of my godparents. I'll never forget that day. I was so thankful that God had given me a new life, with new parents, and friends, and a wonderful church family."

"Before, I was kind of lost and didn't know why. Now, I work hard in school so my parents will be proud of me. I try to live the way Jesus wants us to. That means being kind to others, and all that stuff. Sometimes it's real hard, but then I remember where I used to be. I say thanks to God for my new life."
Christians Celebrate Easter Forever

In the Church, every Sunday is considered a “little Easter”—a time when we remember, through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, that Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead.

We celebrate the first Easter over and over again as we give thanks to God for the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.

We declare, in the words of the Creed, that Jesus died for our sins, was raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven. He lives forever and is present for each one of us, every day of our lives. To believe in this way is to be “Easter people.”

Some scholars of the Bible say that we could take away most of what we know about Jesus (the stories of his birth and of his ministry), and it would not matter. If we only believe that Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead, we are an Easter people of great faith.

Church Interior on a Sunday.

Christians rejoice in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ birth, his teachings, and his deeds of power. They help us to understand even better how we should live as Christians. But it is still the Easter event that is absolutely central to our faith.

Easter Day Begins a Fifty-Day Season

Just as we do on Christmas Day, we seem to treat Easter Day as the “end” of something. Lent, Holy Week, and all the preparations for Easter Day, can leave us with an empty feeling as the sun goes down, our new clothes are hung back in the closet, and we get ready for an ordinary day on Monday.

But Easter, like Christmas, is actually a beginning. Just as Christmas Day begins the celebration of the Twelve Days of Christmas, so Easter begins an even longer celebration. The fifty days of Easter lead to the celebration of Pentecost.

During the season of Easter, the church hangings will be white. Some congregations will remain standing during the Great Thanksgiving, to show joy and praise rather than the penitential posture of kneeling.

During this fifty days, we celebrate Ascension Day. It is always on a Thursday, forty days after Easter Day. Pentecost (also called Whitsunday) is celebrated fifty days after Easter Day.
How Do We Know the Dates for Easter?

Unlike Christmas, which is always on December 25, Easter moves every year to different days in March and April. We call it a “moveable feast.”

To make things a bit more complicated, we need to know the date of Easter before we can establish other important dates on the Church calendar—Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Ascension Day, and Pentecost.

Easter Day is always the first Sunday after the full moon that falls on or after the date of the vernal equinox. Easter can never be any earlier than March 22 or later than April 25.

The calendar at the right is marked to indicate how the date of Easter was determined in a recent year.

Once we have determined the date of Easter, we work backward forty days (not including Sundays) to locate Ash Wednesday. We move forward forty days from Easter Day to find the date for Ascension Day, and fifty days for Pentecost.

NEW LIFE

Clues:
1. Christians proclaim the good _____.
2. God is ____ of heaven and earth.
3. We tell about Jesus by ____ and example.
4. We ____ in Jesus Christ.
5. We know that God ____ our sins.
6. We believe in God the ____.
7. We state our beliefs when we say the Apostles’ ____.
8. We believe in the Holy ____.
9. God forgives us when we ____.
10. Christians strive for ____
    (continued in 11.)
11. and ____ for all people.
12. We seek to ____ Christ.
13. Jesus was ____ for us.
14. He ____ into heaven.
15. Christians join in a Baptismal ____.
16. We respect the dignity of every ____ being.
17. We promise to continue in the ____.
18. We work to love our ____ as our selves.
19. We believe in the ____ of the body.
20. We promise to continue in the apostles’ ____.

Shell Year-Intermediate, Episcopal Children's Curriculum
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Do you believe in God the Father?  
I believe in God, the Father almighty, 
creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ,  
the Son of God?  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only 
Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of 
the Holy Spirit 
and born of the Virgin Mary. 
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, 
was crucified, died, and 
was buried. 
He descended to the dead. 
On the third day he rose again. 
He ascended into heaven, 
and is seated at the right hand 
of the Father. 
He will come again to judge the 
living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the 
Holy Spirit?  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, 
the holy catholic Church, 
the communion of saints, 
the forgiveness of sins, 
the resurrection of the body, 
and the life everlasting.

Will you continue in the 
apostles’ teaching and 
fellowship, in the breaking 
of bread, and in 
the prayers?  
I will, with God’s help.

Will you persevere in resisting 
evil, and, whenever you 
fall into sin, 
repent and return 
to the Lord?  
I will, with God’s help.

Will you proclaim by word and 
example the Good 
News of God in Christ?  
I will, with God’s help.

Will you seek and serve Christ 
in all persons, loving your 
neighbor as yourself?  
I will, with God’s help.

Will you strive for justice and 
peace among all people, and 
respect the dignity of every human 
being?  
I will, with God’s help.