

More Baptism Stories

CHOICES

Keith Lander was asked to speak on 'Choices' to a Methodist congregation:

Most couples only have to choose when? and where? We also had to choose the how of our child's baptism.

When? If we followed the current norm, i.e. during morning service or mass it would have been impossible for both clergy to be present. So we chose the traditional time of Sunday afternoon when both Catholic priest and Methodist minister could attend.

Where? To be baptised as a Roman Catholic the ceremony must be conducted by a Catholic priest (except in extraordinary circumstances) and to be baptised a Methodist, it is normally necessary that it is done in a Methodist church. So we chose to have the baptism in the Methodist church with the Catholic priest pouring the water.

How? As to the choice of form, there is the version in the Methodist Service Book and the one used by the local Catholic church. Neither are mutually exclusive provided all the elements are included. So we chose to combine all seven elements in our own form based on both the Methodist and Catholic service books, with each part led alternately by priest and minister.

So the baptism was registered in both churches, and we have three certificates, one RC, one Methodist, one jointly signed! Our families and members of both congregations attended, complete with Methodist choir and Catholic guitars, almost filling the church. It was a wonderful blessing for our child and as we felt we had made the right choice, we chose similarly for our other two children.

"MISSION IMPOSSIBLE"

Steve and Maureen Mather wrote before their baby was born:

We both feel a strong allegiance to our respective churches, yet feel that each church has something different and equally valuable to contribute. We both attend each other's churches each Sunday... but which church do we baptise our baby in? Although we understand that baptism is not into a denomination but into the family of God, this does not really resolve our dilemma.

Both of us believe in the same things and want to bring our child up as a Christian, not a Catholic or an Anglican, but we feel frustrated and constrained by the actual ecclesiastical practice of the different churches. At the moment I am struggling with a rather dead Catholic local church whereas the Anglican church is lively and spiritual. We do not want to make our decisions on the basis of which church is the best now because should we move, the situation could be reversed.

The decision where to baptise our baby and its future upbringing seem to be inextricably linked, particularly in the eyes of our parents and other people. We always seem to come back to the same point no matter how many times we discuss it - how do we bring up our child as a CHRISTIAN? Sometimes it feels like mission impossible!

AIF was able to supply literature and put the couple in touch with local interchurch families, and a few months later Maureen wrote:

I'm glad to say that Jonathan was baptised last week in a joint service in the Catholic church with the local Anglican vicar and priest sharing the service. This Sunday he was welcomed into the Anglican church at the regular baptism service, so already we feel that with prayer and loving gestures such as that we have successfully started out on the road of bringing up Jonathan in both churches.

AN "ECUMENICAL" BAPTISM

Stephen and Sarah Mulliner write about the baptism of their fourth child:

Charlotte was born when we had lived here for over two years - longer than we had ever stayed in one place before. We had become involved in our two churches, and also tried to go to each church on alternate Sundays as a family.

Our twins had been baptised in our then local Catholic church, with the Anglican vicar present to read and say some prayers. Our third child had a purely Catholic baptism as there was no rapport between the Catholic and Anglican churches in that area. Here the rector and parish priest are good friends.

Charlotte's baptism took place on Sunday afternoon in the Catholic church with many from both congregations present. Stephen's brother played the organ, Charlotte's godfather read the Gospel and the service was taken equally by the parish priest and the rector.

Nobody felt left out. We felt Charlotte was now truly part of the Christian family. She is now well known in both churches' creches and will later attend the children's classes with her brothers and sister. We are very grateful to the parish priest and rector for having made Charlotte's christening such a memorable occasion.

URC in RC

Eileen Finch writes:

Cuthbert's baptism followed the same pattern as with Aidan (see **INTERCHURCH FAMILIES Summer 1990**). It was held in the Catholic church, with Cuthbert's grandfather, a United Reformed Church auxiliary minister, doing the baptism, while the parish priest followed with the anointing with chrism and the giving of the candle.