



***Preparing for Infant and Children's
Baptism in the Episcopal Church***

***With
Anne Kitch***

Facilitator's Guide

Tips for Leading Small Groups

Welcome

A Blessed Ministry

So you've been asked to lead the group...

Thank you for taking on the role of facilitator for this course. We hope this class will help you and your small group in your journey of faith. Your role as a small group leader is very important – but it's also something you don't do alone. You have the blessing and privilege of working alongside the Holy Spirit to help people grow. This is not to be underestimated. You will find that the Spirit wants us to draw near to God more than we do – and in taking on the responsibility to lead, you open yourself up to growth as well, often in unexpected ways.

And you don't have to be an expert. It doesn't take an advanced degree or an ordination certificate to run a successful small group. Willingness to lead and learn is all that's required.

We at ChurchNext are delighted to share this Facilitator's Guide with you; we've designed it for clergy and laypeople. We've written it to help familiarize you with the topic and to give you some ideas as to how you would like your small group to gather.

In the pages that follow we will offer you some pointers regarding group facilitation and conversation-starting. Feel free to make them your own. These are suggestions and are meant to be molded, adapted, or tossed out, depending on your context.

Thanks for learning with us,

The ChurchNext Team

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Facilitating

Begin your meeting by welcoming participants. Try to create an environment of warmth and hospitality. Successful small groups offer safe spaces for authenticity and depth, where people are not uncomfortable exploring personal convictions and intimate ideas. After all, we all long for genuine connection and camaraderie in our spiritual journeys. The entire group benefits when honesty and candor are welcome.

You may want to approach your meeting by dividing your time together into three equal or unequal segments. The first should be spent connecting – greeting, catching up. You may want to offer refreshments. The second segment should be devoted to covering the material in the course, and the third should include a time of prayer.

Lead the class as a sojourner, not an expert. Facilitators lead by example. So when you are open, enthusiastic, and interested in learning, your group will join you.

A typical meeting outline may include: Welcoming, Music, Prayer, Course Material and Discussion, Closing Prayer. We've included some prayers at the end of this guide.

Depending on the topic, your learning goals, and the comfort level of your group, you may want to make the following materials available:

- Copies of the Participant Guides
- Bibles
- Prayer Books
- Paper or notebooks
- Pens or pencils
- Prayers
- Song sheets, Hymnals, music, and music player
- Refreshments

Asking Questions

Perhaps the most important role a facilitator plays is in posing questions and facilitating conversations. Here are some tips:

The key role in leading your small group is to help members engage in meaningful dialogue with one another. It will allow them to uncover deeper truths for themselves and others.

You can use a variety of questions to spark discussion (we've included some at the end of this guide), but we can't encourage you enough to come up with your own. Open-ended questions are best, but yes/no questions followed up with a simple "Why" can yield great reflection. Questions can be categorized like this:

Launching Questions – These are designed to get the discussion going by focusing on the topic. Launching Questions should allow everyone in the group to share personal experiences and connect them with the topic, i.e., *What one thing was the instructor trying to get across? Name an experience that came to mind as you heard the lecture.*

Observation Questions – These are questions which arise from consideration of the subject – how, why, and what do you think? They seek to make meaning of the lesson, i.e., *Why do you think this point is important? What did the lecturer mean by raising that point?*

Reflection Questions – These are transition questions that take us from the information presented to our own lives, i.e., *What does this have to do with me? How does the lecturer's main point resonate with me?*

Application Questions – These are questions that ask us to consider the course material in light of our day-to-day lives, i.e., *What is this new material asking of me? In what ways is my life changed because of what I'm learning?*

Preparing for Infant and Children's Baptism in the Episcopal Church

This step is designed to give you some background on the course.

Baptism signals a beginning, even for the infant: it marks the beginning of a life in Christ, shaped and guided by the support and commitment of the parents, godparents and faith community. Baptism is about living, and when we baptize our children, we're setting them on a track of mindfulness that everything they do is based in God's love and because of God's love.

As parents, this is our belief as we bring our children to God through baptism; it is an affirmation of our own commitment and belief that we are alive in Christ, strengthened by God's grace and by other believers.

In this course, Anne Kitch helps us understand why we do what we do, walks us through the details and practicalities of the ceremony, and suggests ways to live and keep fresh the Baptismal Covenant. We'll come to realize how baptism is an act of faith, an act done in community, a gift of love.

Anne Kitch is an acclaimed author of [several books](#) including Taking the Plunge: Baptism and Parenting, and The Anglican Family Prayer Book. She is currently the Canon of the Ordinary at the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Discussion Questions

Lesson One: Why Have Your Child Baptized?

My Community

We choose a community of faith and a body of saints in which to bring our children into loving relationship with God. Describe your ideal faith community.

All God's People?

If all people are God's people, regardless of whether we are baptized or not, why is baptism such a big part of the Christian Church?

Serious Business

Kitch suggests that baptizing our children is an "act of faith," lived out with much deliberateness.

Discuss. Lesson Two: The Promises We'll Make

Our Adult Faith

What do you understand by the term "lived faith"? Is this strictly personal, or are there standards that should be met to achieve this?

Teaching Our Children To Live Their Faith

How do we teach our children to lovingly live their faith values in the world, even in the face of contradictory values?

Godparenting Why do you think that god-parenting was conceived to play such an important place in a child's faith development? Do you think it is meeting its intended expectations?

Lesson Three: Practical Considerations

Are We Celebrating?

A baptism is a celebration. Why?

Review The Baptismal Service

Prayerfully review or acquaint yourself with the Baptismal service in the Book of Common Prayer. What stands out with you on this review or first reading?

Your Prayer

If you were to create a prayer for parents in preparation for baptism, what would it say.

Discussion Questions

Lesson Four: Bringing Baptism Home

Fellowship And Breaking Bread

Why do you think that fellowship and breaking bread is such an important a part of faith development that it's include

Proclaiming The Good News

How do we teach our children to proclaim by word and example the Good News in Christ?

Are You Really Sorry?

How do we teach our children true contrition?

Lesson Five: Remembering Your Child's Baptism

Teaching Grace And Love

How do we live the example to our children that grace is God's gift given to us and that we are always

God's beloved?

Your Baptism Party If you were to plan a baptism party, how would it look, what would the focus be, and what could you use to evoke meaning?

Meaning In The Ritual

How do rituals bring stability and connection to a household when rituals are often charged with being mindless, rote activities?

Prayers

Finally, you will find that opening and closing your time together in prayer is an effective way of inviting the Holy Spirit into your midst as well as building connection and an atmosphere of openness. While spontaneous prayers are often the most touching and effective, written prayers offer a richness of their own. Here are some:

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (For Self-Dedication, BCP 832)

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For the Human Family, p 815 BCP)

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For Guidance, p 832 BCP)

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For Quiet Confidence, p 832 BCP)

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen. (In the Evening, BCP p 833)