



Emergency Baptism

Anglicans who serve in hospitals and other treatment centres have opportunity, from time to time, to administer and advise on emergency baptism. Nurses, doctors, chaplains, parish clergy all face this issue, usually in an ecumenical and multi-faith setting. As our awareness of the implications of baptism grows, so does our need for mutual support in this sometimes difficult area of sacramental practice.

The following guidelines are offered by the Doctrine and Worship Committee to assist in finding faithful ways of acting in such situations. Anglicans are seldom in a position to regulate the practice of emergency baptism in an institution; and in some places a responsible ecumenical policy may have been developed. Nevertheless, Anglicans may legitimately articulate the particular practice of baptism they feel bound to acknowledge as valid, and which they wish to encourage.

One of the ways these guidelines can be used, especially in a deanery or area where such institutions are located, is for the clergy to discuss the implementation of the guidelines, including in the discussion those members of the deanery or area most directly involved in the institutions; then a delegation can convey to the pastoral services departments of the institutions the concerns raised in the discussion, and offer assistance in implementing the guidelines as appropriate.

It should be noted that the first three paragraphs of the guidelines are drawn from established Anglican liturgies: *The Book of Alternative Services*, the Alternative Services Book of the Church of England and the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of the Province of South Africa. Since the theology of baptism expressed here may be at variance with some prevailing assumptions, it should be given special prominence in any discussion with those involved in emergency baptism, when explaining the Anglican position.

A. Anglican Guidelines for Emergency Baptism

Emergency baptism may be administered to anyone in danger of dying unbaptized, provided that: (a) in the case of an adult, there is evidence to show that the person is desirous of it; or (b) in the case of an infant or young child, the parents request it. If there is reasonable doubt whether the person may already have been baptized, conditional baptism is to be used.

Those requesting emergency baptism should be assured that questions of ultimate salvation or of the provision of a Christian funeral do not depend on whether the person has been baptized.

The candidate and/or the family of the candidate shall be informed that if the candidate survives, recognition of the baptism at a public celebration of the sacrament is expected, in order that the baptism may be acknowledged by the Church.

The recognition of an emergency baptism at a public celebration of the sacrament shall be recorded by the officiant of that service. At the time of the baptism, information



concerning the baptism shall also be provided to the pastoral services department (or equivalent) of the institution, so that the baptism can be recorded and the information passed on to the parish of the candidate.

A form for the administration of baptism in emergency, with an attached form of certification, is provided with these guidelines. While any Christian may baptize, in the exceptional circumstance that the only appropriate person to administer baptism is a member of the candidate's family, hospital staff may be glad to have this form to provide.