

Oral Celebration of the Rites of Initiation

“Speaking” relationally: some congregations speak relationally using printed texts; for others, extemporaneous oral call and response forms are the primary mode of liturgical action. In increasing numbers of congregations there is a valuing of enhancing communication by adding digital images and sounds to print or oral approaches. For print oriented texts of these services see Come to the Waters by Daniel T. Benedict Jr. <http://www.upperroom.org/bookstore/>

The following outline is an attempt to provide those who plan and lead “oral” and “oral/digital” approaches with a narrative of each of the rites of Christian initiation that can inform and guide communications without giving prescribed texts. [] indicate a move that could be used if appropriate in the context.

The moves of the WELCOME (any Sunday when an inquirer is discerned to be ready)

- Expressing joy and delight at what God is doing in drawing this/these person/s
- What do you seek?
- [Renunciation of a former way of worship, if desired]
- Invitation to hear and follow Jesus, the Word of God
- Asking for an initial commitment
- Asking the mentors to care and live as examples
- Prayer
- Marking as disciples (signing with the cross)
- [Posting in narthex or church hall pictures of the catechumens]

The moves of the ENROLLMENT following the sermon [Lent I, Advent I or another Sunday] or Presentation of those seeking baptism or reaffirmation

- Witness of the sponsors that conversion is taking place
- Invitation and call to be baptized into union with Christ
- Encouragement to the candidates/catechumens and exhortation to the sponsors
- Prayer for the new catechumens

The moves of EASTER INITIATION [with in the rite of the Easter Vigil, Baptism of the Lord or another day]

- Introducing what God does in baptism
- Presentation of the candidate
- Call to renounce evil and to profess the faith of the church
- Thanksgiving over the water for God’s mighty deeds and prayer for the action of the Holy Spirit
- Baptism with as much water as you can
- Laying on of hands and prayer
- [signing with the cross with or without oil]
- [clothing with a new garment]
- Welcoming the newly baptized [with presentation of a candle]
- Holy Communion with the newly baptized communing first

The moves of AFFIRMATION OF MINISTRY [on the Day of Pentecost, Transfiguration Sunday or another Lord’s Day service following the sermon or at the sending forth]

- Introducing God’s call and our vocation to living our baptism into Christ ministry
- Sharing briefly each neophyte or affirmers arena of service that is to be affirmed
- Comments by the neophyte or affirmer
- Blessing and affirming each in their area of service/ministry
- Prayer
- [at the conclusion of the liturgy]
- Blessing the whole assembly with dismissal to service and witness