Your group is made up of 20 kindergarten and first grade age kids. They are frequent attenders at church, and their families very much fall into Roberto’s scenario one. It is Sunday morning and you are meeting in the church fellowship hall during worship. You have 50 minutes to introduce them to the concept of baptism. What do you do with them? What resources do you need? How many volunteers, and of what sort?

Your group is made up of 20 kindergarten and first grade age kids. They are a diverse bunch, some of them come to church at least once a month, some of them have never been inside of a church. They are gathered this day because your church offers a free evening meal once a week and their families have brought them here. The families fall across all four of Roberto’s scenarios. You are going to introduce the concept of baptism in some way during the evening. What will you do? What resources do you need? How many volunteers, and of what sort?

You are one of a number of adults who are accompanying your child’s first grade public school class on a trip to the zoo. Your daughter, who loves going to church on Sunday, tells some friends about the baptism she watched last week during liturgy. Other kids start to pump her with questions, and she turns to you to help explain. What will you say? What are the dilemmas you might face in this “teachable moment”? What resources might be helpful? What illustrations are ready at hand?

You are enjoying refreshments with a number of good friends at a baby shower. The mother-to-be is Lutheran, and the father-to-be is Muslim. The talk turns to whether the child should be baptized or named and claimed. What do you offer by way of insight into the discussion? What questions might you suggest as a way to think about the issues?

You are enjoying a late summer baseball game, sitting in the stands. Your team is too far ahead for you to pay careful attention to the game, and talk turns to a recent bestselling book that seems to be arguing that there is no hell. One of your friends makes the case that anyone who is not baptized as an infant risks dying and ending up in limbo. Another suggests that baptism is just a lot of hooey, and nobody except your grandparents really cares about it anymore. What will you say about baptism? How will you join in the conversation? What questions might you ask, and what resources will you bring to bear?

You are going to be a “guest lecturer” in your church’s confirmation program. Your topic is baptism. The class has over 75 kids in it, broken down into small groups. The general pattern of an evening session is a large group presentation, and then small group discussions. What will form the heart of your presentation? What ideas do you want to get across, and how will you share them? What do you hope will happen in the small group time? What resources do you need, and what volunteers are necessary?

Your church has a weekly “theology on tap” program in a local bar. At the last minute the pastor has been called away to visit at a hospital, and you have been tapped as the “resident theologian.” The topic is: “Baptism: why it matters, and what it means.” Do you want to change the title? What resources will you need? How will you approach the topic?

Your church has a Sunday morning free breakfast program that is beginning to draw people from the homeless shelter down the block. Two of the women who come regularly have started to come to worship on Sundays, too. Both of them are in their 30’s, and have struggled with addiction and mental health issues. Now they have asked to be baptized. How will you prepare them? What are the core pieces of content you want them to engage?

Your church is a small, struggling upstart congregation in a middle class suburban neighborhood on the west coast. You are a multicultural community, with members whose families have Confucian roots, Hmong roots, Buddhist roots, African American Baptist roots, as well as an assortment of middle class white Protestant roots. You want to put together an intergenerational learning event that will help people who come from any of these backgrounds to think together about baptism from a Lutheran perspective. What will you do? What resources do you need? What are the key questions you hope to provoke?

You are a new pastor in a three-point parish in rural Minnesota. Each of the three churches is very small, and each of them has just a few families who seem to be in charge of everything that happens. There are only a few babies born each year into this community – at most two per church – and after baptism none of the young families seem to return to the church. It’s almost as if they go through baptism just because their own parents (who are now grandparents) want them to do so. You would like to change this pattern. What are you going to try? What questions will you ask of the families in this church? What resources do you need?

**Baptism teaching exploration exercise**

1. Pick a challenge from the pool of opportunities
2. Look through your course books for ideas
3. Search the web and your own experience for ideas
4. Plan a response to the challenge
5. Put together a “challenge brief” that describes the challenge you’re seeking to meet (this brief should include a description of the challenge, as well as your hoped-for learning outcomes, the resources you imagine needing, and the essential questions you hope your learning event will respond to)
6. Remember: relationality, the five forms of curriculum (how might/might not each help you in your particular challenge?), and the various triads
7. Keep track of your questions: what don’t you know? What are the things you would like to know in order to better respond to this challenge?

(Handout developed for EL1515 at Luther Seminary by Mary Hess)