

# Still MAKING A SPLASH

The baptism preparation booklet has been the best-selling item on the Baptists Together online shop over the last decade. Author Nick Lear shares the thinking behind it

**D**espite the title of the Baptists Together book *Making a Splash*, believers' baptism is so much more than getting wet. It's even more than simply making a public declaration of faith in Jesus – you can do that without getting wet!

Something spiritually significant happens as we are immersed not only in water but into the community of faith. It's as if the booming voice from Jesus' baptism echoes through the ages at our baptism: "This is my son/daughter, whom I love. I am well-pleased with them." There is a blessing and affirmation that we are children of God and part of the forever family. That's why it's such an important distinctive for Baptist Christians.

I was baptised as a believer aged 13 in 1981. I attended 'preparation classes' and was given a book to help me understand what I was doing but it wasn't aimed at someone my age. I wondered if there ought to be, and that thought lodged in the back of my mind. Until... in 2006 I was working at Baptist House as a Mission Adviser: supporting churches working with children, young people, young adults, and families. I felt I was ideally placed to create a resource for young people preparing for Believers' baptism.

I shared my idea with others in the team and was commissioned to write a guide for baptism for young people. I wanted a slightly silly title so decided to call it 'Making a Splash'. I contacted several youth specialists I knew from my job and they kindly acted as a

sounding board for me as well as contributing to the resource. (Thank you again Helen Bellamy, Claire Earl, Andy Levett, and Gary Bott).

My idea for *Making a Splash* was to explore the promises that people make when they are



baptised. After all, you ought to know what you're agreeing to if it's to mean anything. The baptism questions cover so much of what Christians believe that I felt they would provide the framework for the initial part of resource that explores what we believe. I also wanted to have some practical sections about what to wear, about what to say in your testimony, and I felt it was important we also had a section on Church Membership, since baptism is also about belonging.

YouTube wasn't really a thing back then but I wanted to have a video of someone being baptised included in the resource somehow. Including a CD would have been too expensive so I came up with the idea of a 'flickbook' – having a sequence of photos taken from someone being baptised in the bottom corner of the pages so that if you flick through you can see someone being immersed in the pool and raised back up again. It works surprisingly well (and if you reverse it you can dry the person off!)

I also wanted it to have some levity – after all being baptised is a happy event. We approached Dave Walker (of cartoonchurch.com) and sent him the text of the book. He came up with some funny cartoons that reflected the content brilliantly.

I was really pleased with the final version and hoped it would be useful to churches. I was thrilled when I discovered that the books were flying off the 'shelves' of the Baptist Union online bookshop. It became the bestselling book. And, to my surprise, I got feedback to say that churches were not just using it for young people, but for all ages.

If I was starting to write the resource today I wonder if it would be a book at all? Would it simply be a website with videos embedded in it? Would there be much text at all, or would it be more of a podcast / vlog? It could be any or all of those things, but it feels to me that there is something significant about it being a book. You can give a book to someone and it's a tangible gift, where sending someone to a website is not as special.

Eventually Baptists Together ran out of copies and, rather than another print run of the original version, I was approached by the team at Baptist House to ask if I would be willing to update it. This would be a second edition that would be 'a guide for baptism' for all ages, not just young people. The structure remained the same, although I refreshed the content. We kept the flickbook baptism and the cartoons, but it was made to look a little more conventional.

*Making a Splash* was republished in June 2015 and continues to sell well (so I'm told). It's immensely encouraging to think how many thousands of people have been prepared for their baptisms using that little

book! But what gives me most joy is that I have been able to use it preparing people to be baptised in churches where I have ministered, including my eldest daughter and I pray that it remains a spiritual landmark in the lives of all who are baptised.



Nick Lear is the minister of  
Mutley Baptist Church  
in Plymouth

4869 - The number of copies  
of *Making a Splash* bought  
from the Baptists Together  
online shop since the shop's  
launch in 2013

*Making a Splash* has been  
the shop's most bought item  
every year since 2013  
[baptist.org.uk/shop](http://baptist.org.uk/shop)

#### WHAT NOT TO WEAR FOR YOUR BAPTISM

