THE ORDER FOR THE BAPTISM OF ADULTS AND THEIR ADMISSION TO THE LORD’S TABLE

The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Article 6) states that it is the office of the elders together with the minister of the Word to “…pass upon the fitness of those who desire to make public confession of faith…” (Sec. 1c). “Only those persons may be received as members of the Church in full communion who have made confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ before the Board of Elders…” (Sec. 6a). From this it seems clear that the minister, if any, and elders shall pass on the fitness of persons desiring to be baptized and received into full communion, admit such as are found to be properly prepared, and authorize their reception into full membership and admission to the Lord’s Table before the congregation.

The following procedure and office fulfill these constitutional provisions. The Order consists of two parts, the one before the elders, offered as a suggestion, and the one before the congregation.

BEFORE THE ELDERS

The suggested Order for the interrogation is the same as that for those baptized in infancy seeking admission to holy Communion. It is given in the following Order, which see.

BEFORE THE CONGREGATION

Baptism and admission to holy Communion should be before the congregation. As one of the Sacraments, Baptism should be administered after the service of the Word. See the outline for the sequence.

Institution

Beloved in the Lord, attend to the words of the institution of the Sacrament of holy Baptism, as they were delivered by our Lord and Savior to his disciples after his resurrection:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20
In fulfillment of our Lord’s institution and command, the Church, acknowledging God’s gracious covenant with his people, recognizes the Sacrament of Baptism as a sign and seal of membership in the body of Christ both to believing adults and to children of the faithful.

**Meaning of the Sacrament**

In the celebration of Christian Baptism we confess that we with our children are sinful by nature and under the judgment of God. We cannot enter into God’s kingdom unless we are born again and seek our cleansing and salvation in him alone.

Baptism is a sign and seal of our ingrafting into the body of Christ. We are baptized in the name of the Triune God, who thereby assures us of the forgiveness of our sins, through the blood of Christ; of our adoption into the household of faith; of our daily renewing and cleansing by his Spirit; and of our resurrection to eternal life.

By this assurance we are called to new obedience; to hold fast to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to trust and love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; and to forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. And if we sometimes, through weakness, fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin, since Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.

That is Sacrament may be celebrated to God’s glory, to the strengthening of our faith, and to the upbuilding of his Church, let us call on his holy name.

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Father in heaven, we thank thee for Jesus Christ, who by his cross and resurrection has redeemed us from sin and death, into which by our disobedience we have fallen, and has given us hope of eternal life. We bless thee, O God, that by him thou hast entered into a covenant of grace with thy people and appointed the holy Sacrament of Baptism to be its sign and seal.
Look on us in mercy, we pray, and sanctify with thy Word and Spirit this Sacrament to the use for which thou hast ordained it; and grant that this thy servant now to be baptized may, through the power of the Holy Spirit, be made a true member of Christ’s body, the Church; and being kept in thy love, finally obtain his inheritance in thine eternal kingdom.

And remembering that we are not our own but belong to our faithful Savior, we offer thee ourselves as servants in the fulfillment of thy promise to be our God and the God of our children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Confession of Faith and Vows

If at the same service there are those who, baptized in infancy, now seek admission to the Lord’s Table, this Confession of Faith and these vows may be used for their admission as well as for the adults who are to be baptized.

Dearly Beloved, you who now seek Christian Baptism [and you who have been baptized in infancy] have already before the elders made a confession of your faith and of your determination to live the Christian life. Now in this most solemn manner before God and his Church, you are to repeat and renew that confession. Let us all arise and confess our Faith, in the words of the Apostles’ Creed.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

The minister shall then put the following questions to the candidate(s):

Do you acknowledge and confess the Apostolic Faith thus affirmed as your Faith, and do you purpose steadfastly to continue to the end of your life in
the truth affirmed in these Articles of the Christian Faith, as they are taught in the Church of Christ, according to the Word of God?

Do you acknowledge that you are delivered from all your sins and miseries only by the saving work of Jesus Christ, and will seek to show true gratitude to God for this deliverance?

Do you promise to make faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the use of the Sacraments; to give faithful adherence to the doctrines and teaching of the Church; to walk in the spirit of Christian fellowship and brotherly love with the congregation; to submit yourself to all Christian admonition; to offer faithfully to the service of God your prayers and your gifts; and to seek the things that make for purity and peace in the Church of Jesus Christ as long as you live? What is your response?

The candidate(s) shall then reply:

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

The minister shall then ask the congregation:

Do you, the members of this congregation, as those who are already under the privileges and obligations of this covenant, welcome into your fellowship this servant of God who has now confessed his faith in Christ, and pledge to him your confidence and affection as members together with him of this household of faith? What is your response?

The congregation shall then reply:

We do.

The congregation may be seated.

Administration of the Sacrament

The candidate kneeling, the minister shall baptize him, saying:

N____, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Declaration

The following declaration may then be made, also for those who were baptized in infancy. Each candidate will kneel and the minister, laying his hands on the head of the candidate(s), shall say:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his Church, I declare that N______ (here the minister shall name the person), received into the visible membership of the holy Catholic Church through Baptism, is now admitted to the Lord’s Table.

Prayer

This or another suitable prayer may be used.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, we thank and praise thee that thou hast given to this thy servant power and grace to own and accept for himself thy holy covenant, sealed and confirmed to him in his Baptism. Strengthen him, we pray thee, with the Holy Spirit the Comforter. Increase in him daily thy manifold gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. Keep him from the evil that is in the world. Enable him to walk in the Spirit and so lead him in the knowledge and obedience of thy Word that he may obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

General Prayers

The General Prayers should be concluded with the Lord’s Prayer if it has not been previously used in the Order.

Hymn

Benediction

If the Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated in another place in the Order, it should be concluded with the Prayer after Baptism. The service then should continue to follow the Order to the end.