THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

The Sacrament of Baptism should be administered on the Lord’s Day during the primary service of worship. The requirements of the Reformed Church in America regarding the sacrament should have been met fully before the administration of baptism takes place.

Baptism shall be administered using water, by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. It shall take place before the whole congregation.

MEANING OF THE SACRAMENT

The continuity of the Meaning is maintained in the paragraphs in roman type. The paragraphs in italics may be selected to set forth the doctrine in greater fullness.

Beloved in the Lord, the Sacrament of Baptism is a visible, holy sign and seal instituted by God so that he may the more fully reveal and seal to us the promise of the gospel, that because of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross we are, through grace alone, granted the forgiveness of our sins and given new and eternal life.

In baptism God reveals and seals to us his mercy and forgiveness. For, though we are sinners, sinful in our very nature, our sins are washed away in Christ’s blood, poured out for us on the cross, and our old, sinful nature is crucified with him so that we might be brought to live new and holy lives. Of this the Apostle Paul reminds us:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. Romans 6:3-4

In baptism God reveals and seals to us his covenant of salvation, given first to Noah and his whole family whom God saved from the waters of the flood, and renewed time after time through the Patriarchs and Prophets until it reached perfection in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. We participate in this covenant through faith in Christ, and in him become a new creation. So Scripture promises through the Gospel writer John:

To all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. John 1:12-13 NIV
In baptism God reveals and seals to us the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit who through the sacrament assures us that our whole salvation is rooted in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Through the Holy Spirit God begins this good work in us and daily renews us, setting us apart to be members of Christ so that more and more we may die to sin and live in a consecrated and blameless way. So the Apostle Paul speaks to us:

> When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.  

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Titus 3:4-7 NIV

The sign and seal of this promise is made visible in the water of baptism, for as surely as water cleanses us physically, so surely does the blood of Christ cleanse us spiritually.

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.

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Acts 2:39 NIV

INSTITUTION

After his resurrection the Lord Jesus came to his disciples and said:

> 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.

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Matthew 28:18-20

VOWS

It is in fulfillment of our Lord’s institution and command that the Church now administers holy baptism to N._____________ (full names)

I ask him her them
and his her their parents
to come before the congregation now that we may together affirm our faith, renew our commitment, and ask God for his grace.

> When they have taken their place before the font, the minister shall say:

Let us stand together.
Then, addressing the candidate(s) or the parents, the minister shall continue:

Beloved in the Lord, you stand before us having brought this child these children to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Therefore, before God and Christ’s Church I ask you to answer sincerely these questions:

Do you accept the Gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ revealed in the holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments as the only way to eternal life?

I do.

Do you acknowledge that you and this child these children are (a) sinner(s), sinful by nature, but that by the grace of God alone your sins are forgiven and your old nature is put to death, so that you may be brought to newness of life and set apart as a member(s) of the body of Christ?

I do.

Do you promise to pray for your child children, for yourself, and for others, asking God’s guidance in training him her them as together we seek to grow in knowledge and understanding of the faith?

I do.

Do you promise to show in your own person the joy of new life in Christ, by active participation with him her them in the life of the Church and by faithful attendance to worship, service, and the offering of prayers and gifts, to the glory of God?

I do, and I ask God, and you his people, to help me to keep these promises.

When all have risen, the minister shall address the congregation.

Do you the members of this congregation now renew your own baptismal vows as you celebrate this sacrament of grace?
We do.

Do you promise to seek God’s guidance as you welcome
this these brother(s) and sister(s)
into the community of faith and as you provide
him her them
with Christian love and nurture through your prayers and encouragement, your

teaching and affection?

We do.

Let us confess our Christian faith using the Apostles’ Creed:

I. THE APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
    He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
    and born of the virgin Mary,
    He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
        was crucified, died, and was buried.
    He descended to the dead.
    On the third day he rose again.
    He ascended into heaven,
        and is seated on the right hand of the Father.
    He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
    the holy catholic church,
    the communion of saints,
    the forgiveness of sins,
    the resurrection of the body,
    and the life everlasting. Amen.

Or,

II. 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.

N.B. A metrical version of the creed may be sung using RIL, hymn 609.

The congregation may be seated. If it has not already been done, the minister may pour water into the font.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we thank you for Jesus Christ, who by his sacrifice of death on the cross has saved us from our sin, and by his resurrection from the dead has given us the blessing of eternal life. We praise you that, in Christ, you have made a covenant of grace with your people and appointed the holy Sacrament of Baptism to be its sign and seal.

Send your Holy Spirit to us now, that we who celebrate this sacrament may be renewed in our participation in the saving work of Christ, and that this your child these your children who now receive(s) the water of baptism may also receive spiritual cleansing and newness of life through the Holy Spirit’s power. And remembering that we are not our own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves to you, asking you to work in us that which is pleasing in your sight, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

If there are infants or small children to be baptized the minister may hold them to administer the sacrament. Others to be baptized shall kneel. The minister shall baptize each with water saying:

N__________ (use Christian names, omit surnames)
I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The following declaration may be made:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his Church, I declare that this child is now received into the visible membership of the Holy Catholic Church, and is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to be his faithful servant unto his her life’s end.

or this at the baptism of adults:

This child of God is received into the Body of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Romans 8:16-17 NIV

After baptism has been administered, the following prayer shall be offered.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

O Lord, through your grace alone you cleanse and renew this your child these your children.
Bless him her them and strengthen him her them daily with the power of the Holy Spirit;
unfold to him her them, more and more,
the riches of your love
and deepen his her their faith;
keep him her them from the power of evil,
enabling him her them to live
a holy and blameless life until your kingdom comes.
At the baptism of infants

Bless your servants, these parents, that they may keep the promises they have made. Grant them your presence and your Holy Spirit that they may bring up their child children to know you, love you, and serve you. Help them to be living examples of the Christian faith, within their family, and in the Church of your dear Son.

At the baptism of all

Bless also your whole Church and this congregation. Strengthen us to obey your command to go forth and make disciples, to baptize them in your name, and to teach the gospel of Christ. Continue to enrich our life together and to add to the number of the faithful those who are being saved until your kingdom is fulfilled. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

The service of worship shall continue according to the order for the day.