THE ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF INFANT BAPTISM

The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Article 9, Section 4) states that the “Sacrament of Baptism shall be administered if possible at a time and place of public worship. The Office for the Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism must be read.” Except for good reasons, Baptism shall be administered in the church. Parents or guardians must be present to assume the vows. The Church prohibits the practice of others assuming the vows for the parents or for the guardians.

The teaching of the Reformed Church concerning the nature of Baptism and the taking of the vows by the parents presupposes that at least one of them be a communicant member of the Christian Church (see Article 9, The Constitution RCA). The mode of Baptism in the Reformed Church in America is generally that of sprinkling but immersion if desired is valid and proper.

The use of the prayers set forth in this form is not to be regarded as obligatory. As one of the Sacraments, Baptism should be administered after the service of the Word. See the outline for the proper 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 Jesus Christ 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.

Scripture

One or more of these passages shall be read.
Let us therefore hear the Word of God in which this gracious promise is made to us:

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.  

*Genesis 17:7*

*And/or*

For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.  

*Acts 2:39*

*And/or*

Thus Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In thee shall all the nations be blessed.” And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.  

*Galatians 3:6-8, 29*

*And/or*

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.  

*Ephesians 4:4-6*

*And/or*

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.  

*Mark 10:14-16*

**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 can not 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 this 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 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 child 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

Dearly Beloved, since Baptism is in the name of the Triune God, let us
arise and confess with the Church through the ages our Christian 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 parents and congregation will remain standing until after the vows.*

**Vows**

*Minister to the parents:*

Since you, the parents of *this child*, desire holy Baptism for *him* you are sincerely to give answer to these questions before God and his Church:

Do you accept the Gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ revealed in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which we have now confessed in the Articles of the Christian Faith as the only way to eternal life?

Do you acknowledge that *this child* with us *is* sinful by nature and under the judgment of God, but *is* received by grace, sanctified in Christ, and numbered among his people, of which Baptism is the sign and seal?

Do you promise to instruct *this child* in the truth of God’s Word and in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; to pray for *him* and to teach *him* to pray; and to train *him* by your precept and example, as God may give you grace, in all holy living, and in the nurture and worship of the Church? What is your response?

*The parents shall respond:*
I do.

The Lord bless you and your child, and give you grace faithfully to perform these promises.

Minister to the congregation:

Do you, the members of this congregation, renew your vows under this covenant of grace, and promise to sustain the fellowship of faith and life within the Church of Christ, in which our children are made partakers of him and all his benefits? What is our response?

The congregation shall respond:

We do.

Administration of the Sacrament

When the minister and parents have come to the font, and the congregation is seated, the minister shall say:

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

Then 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 life’s end.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank thee that we may bring our children to thee, and baptize them in thy holy name. Bless this child whom we have brought to thee, and guard, we pray thee, his life and health, and fulfill to him thy gracious promises. Incline him by thy Holy Spirit to take his place in the Church of thy Son Jesus Christ; enable him to overcome the
temptations of the world; and, finally, to obtain an inheritance among thy saints in light.

Bless thy servants, his parents, that they may faithfully perform the duties laid upon them, training their child in the truth of thy Gospel, and walking before him and with him in the beauty of holiness.

Guide us, thy people, by Word and Spirit, in the fulfillment of our vow to sustain the fellowship and life within thy Church for the nurture of this child, that he may grow up into all the fullness of Christ.

Bless, we pray thee, all the children of thy Church, and prepare them hereafter to carry on the work now committed to us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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