CELEBRATING THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT: THE ORDER FOR
BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

In the Reformed Church in America, the board of elders considers requests for baptism and receives people
into the life and work of the congregation (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Secs. 1 and 2).
While there are various orders for baptism for different members of the covenental community, there is only
one sacrament of baptism. The Sacrament of Baptism should be celebrated as part of the congregation’s
worship on the Lord’s Day. It may be administered as part of the Approach, as visible Proclamation of the
Word, or as Response to the Word. The requirements of the Reformed Church in America shall be fully met
before the baptism takes place (BCO, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 11b; Article 5, Section 2a). For the
purposes of this liturgy, the term “parent” refers to parents or guardians.

The congregation is encouraged to make generous, visible, audible use of water throughout this liturgy where
appropriate.

If the liturgical practice of the congregation includes use of a paschal candle, it is lighted before the service
begins.

PREPARATION

The minister addresses the congregation from the font:

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:
“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, and
teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always,
to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:
“There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called
to the one hope of your calling,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of all,
who is above all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 4:4-6

And/or John 1:12-13; Acts 2:39; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:10; Romans 6:3-4;
Romans 10:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:2-13, 27; 1 Peter 2:9

Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s promises to this covenant people.
In baptism God promises by grace alone:
to forgive our sins,
to adopt us into the body of Christ, the church,
to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us, and
to resurrect us to eternal life.

This promise is made visible in the water of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font at this time.
Water cleanses, purifies, refreshes, sustains; Jesus Christ is living water.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience: to love and trust God completely, to forsake the evil of the world, and to live a new and holy life.

Yet, when we fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin, for baptism is the sign and seal of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.

PRESENTATION

An elder shall introduce the parents or guardians using the following statements as appropriate.

NN/s (using full name/s) come/s before us to present her/his/their daughter(s)/son(s), NN/s (using full name/s), to receive the sacrament of baptism.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the parents:

Beloved of God,
I ask you before God and Christ’s church to reject evil, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the church.
Do you renounce sin and the power of evil in your life and in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, and, through worship and service, seek to advance God’s purposes here and throughout the world?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

Do you promise to instruct these children/this child in the truth of God’s Word, in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; to pray for them, to teach them to pray; and to train them in Christ’s way by your example, through worship, and
in the nurture of the church?

I do, and I ask God to help me.

The congregation is asked to rise in order to make their promises. The minister or elder addresses the members of the congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support these brothers and sisters by teaching the gospel of God’s love, by being an example of Christian faith and character, and by giving the strong support of God’s family in fellowship, prayer, and service?

We do.

The minister or elder addresses the parents:

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the church, to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation, and to seek those things that make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

The congregation and the parents shall join in confessing the faith in the words of the Apostles’ Creed. The questions may be omitted.

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, 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, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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.

The congregation may be seated; the minister continues.
PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks,
O holy and gracious God,
for the gift of water.

In the beginning of creation your Spirit moved over the waters.
In the waters of the flood you destroyed evil.
You led the children of Israel through the sea
into the freedom of the promised land.
In the river Jordan, John baptized our Lord
and your Spirit anointed him.
By his death and resurrection
Jesus Christ, the Living Water,
forgives us,
free us from sin and death,
and opens the way to life everlasting.
We thank you, O God, for the gift of baptism.
In this water you confirm to us
that we are buried with Christ in his death,
raised to share in his resurrection,
are being renewed by power of the Holy Spirit, and
united to Christ in mission.

The minister may touch the water.

Send your Holy Spirit, we pray,
upon these here baptized (minister may prefer to use the names of the candidates),
that this water may be a spring gushing up to eternal life.
Wash away their sin,
raise them to new life, and
graft them to the body of Christ.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon them, that they may have
wisdom to discern their gifts,
strength to obey your will,
and joy in answering your call.

To you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One God,
be all praise, honor, and glory, now and forever. Amen.

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

For the baptism of children:

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism.

The minister may ask the parents of each child:

What is the name of this child?
The parents shall give the Christian name; the minister may hold infants or small children, addressing each:

\[ N \text{ (Christian name only, no surname),} \]
for you Jesus came into the world;
for you he died and conquered death;
all this he did for you, little one,
though you know nothing of it as yet.
We love because God first loved us.

Using Christian name/s, omitting surname/s, the minister shall immerse, pour, or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of the person of the Trinity, saying:

\[ N \text{ (Christian name only, no surname), I baptize you} \]
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,

The minister may mark the sign of the cross on the forehead with a gesture or using oil, saying to each:

\[ N \text{ (Christian name only, no surname), child of the covenant,} \]
in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit,
marked as God’s own forever, and
called to follow Christ in mission. Amen.

The minister may offer this or a similar prayer:

Gracious Lord,
Look with kindness upon these parents.
Let them ever rejoice in the gift you have given them.
Grant them the presence of your Holy Spirit
That they may bring up these children
To know you, to love you, and to serve you. Amen.

DECLARATION

The minister shall make the following declaration.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the only King and Head of the Church,
these sisters and brothers are now
received into the visible membership of the holy catholic Church,
engaged to confess Christ and
to be God’s faithful servant/s until life’s end.

WELCOME

The minister invites the congregation to stand.

By the Holy Spirit we who believe and are baptized receive a ministry
to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and
to love and serve those with whom we live and work.
We are ambassadors for Christ,
who reconciles and makes whole.
We are the salt of the earth;
we are the light of the world.
The minister says:

Welcome our *brothers and sisters* in Christ.

An appropriate gesture of thanks and welcome may be used.