ORDER FOR THE 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 or as visible Proclamation of the Word. The requirements of the Reformed Church in America shall be fully met before the baptism takes place (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 11b; Article 5, Section 2a).

PREPARATION

The minister addresses the congregation:

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

The minister continues, using one or more of the following:

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

Or

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27-28
Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

*Romans 6:3-4*

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

*John 1:12-13*

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

*Genesis 17:7*

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.

*Galatians 3:29*

For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.

*Acts 2:39*
The minister continues:

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 is 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 presents the adult candidates or the parents of children for baptism:

On behalf of the Board of Elders
I present (using full names) [who bring their child/children] to receive the sacrament of baptism.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the parents or candidates:

Beloved of God, you stand before us [having brought this child/these children] to receive the sacrament of baptism.
I ask you, therefore, 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.

At the baptism of adults:

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.

At the baptism of infants or young children:

Do you promise
to instruct this child/these children
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 shall rise; 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 congregation and the candidates (or their parents) join in affirming the faith in the words of the Apostles’ Creed. The questions may be omitted.

A

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

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

I believe 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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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.

Or

B

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 now or following the prayer.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The minister says:

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,  
frees 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,  
and are being renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Pour out on us your Holy Spirit,  
so that those here baptized may be washed clean and receive new life.
To you be all honor and glory, dominion and power, now and forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

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

At the baptism of children, 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 (use Christian name; omit surname),
For you Jesus Christ came into the world; for you he died and for you he 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, the minister shall either immerse or pour or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of each person of the Trinity, saying:

N (use Christian name; omit surname), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may place a hand on the person’s head and may mark on the forehead the sign of the cross, saying to each:

N (use Christian name; omit surname), child of the covenant in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. Amen.

DECLARATION, BLESSING, AND WELCOME

When all have been baptized, the minister may make the following declaration:

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

The minister shall offer the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God,
we thank you that you cleanse and renew
these your children through your grace alone.
Bless and strengthen them daily
with the gift of your Holy Spirit;
unfold to them the riches of your love,
deepening their faith,
keeping them from the power of evil
and enabling them to live a holy and blameless life
until your kingdom comes.

At the baptism of children:

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.

The congregation shall stand.

Welcome our new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Joyfully we receive you into the body of Christ.
Join with us as we give witness in the world to the good news,
for we are all one in Christ Jesus.
Alleluia.

The following blessing may be said or sung by the congregation while the elders may greet the baptismal group:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace. Amen. Numbers 6:24-26

The congregation may be seated.