In the Reformed Church in America, the board of elders receives people into the life and work of the congregation (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Sec. 2a). Reception of confessing members is based on a candidate’s profession of faith, a reaffirmation of such a profession, or the presentation of a satisfactory certificate from another Christian congregation (BCO, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Sec. 2a, b).

The Order for Profession of Faith is anchored in and builds upon the RCA Order for the Sacrament of Baptism. The order integrates the varied components of receiving confessing members into a congregation: those persons seeking adult baptism, those baptized as infants making initial profession of faith, those reaffirming faith, and those transferring from another Christian church. The order also provides for the baptism of their children.

Part I of this order may be used by the elders in the exercise of their authority. Part II is for use in celebration with the congregation.

**PART I: BEFORE THE ELDERS**

At the meeting of the elders, the presiding minister of Word and sacrament or the presiding elder shall present each person by name. After the presentation, the order proceeds:

Scripture promises:

- If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 
- For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.”

_Romans 10:9-11_

Let us pray.

O Lord, source of all light and life, illumine us with your wisdom that what we do at this time may be pleasing in your sight; that your church may be strengthened and increased; and that your name be glorified among your people in both the church and the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. _Amen._
FAITH SHARING

The elders shall engage in a conversation with the people, inquiring concerning their acceptance of the Christian faith and the sincerity of their desire to live as confessing members of the congregation. If personal credos (written faith statements) have been prepared, they shall be presented at this time.

THE QUESTIONS

The minister or presiding elder continues:

Dearly beloved in the Lord,
in baptism, we are grafted into Christ,
received into the household of faith, and
made inheritors of the covenant of which baptism is the sign and seal.
In grace and mercy,
God, by the Holy Spirit,
has implanted faith through Word and sacrament.
You have come now before God and the church
to profess your faith in Christ.

The following questions are written for unison response. If individual responses are desired, the minister or presiding elder may ask all questions, then address each person, “What is your response?”

Do you believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

I do.

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule for faith and life?

I do.

Do you, relying on the grace of God, promise to confess Christ publicly before others, to serve Christ daily, and to walk in Jesus’ way?

I do.
Do you promise to exhibit the joy of new life in Christ; to share fully in the life of the church; to be faithful in worship and service; and to offer your prayers and gifts?

I do.

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 which make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

BLESSING

Be assured that as you declare your faith, God will be faithful to strengthen you, and to renew you by the Holy Spirit, that you may grow in grace and knowledge, and may keep this covenant faithfully all your days.

The meeting shall conclude with the following or another suitable prayer offered by the presiding minister or one of the elders, with all joining in the Lord’s Prayer.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we praise you that by the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself; and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to Christ and his service. We thank you for the baptismal covenant you make with all your servants. As your grace has drawn Ns (names of candidates) to you, continue to strengthen and sustain them. By your Holy Spirit, daily increase in them your gifts: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the reverence of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us to pray, saying:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

The elders will reach their decision and may establish the date for the public reception of the new confessing members.

PART II: BEFORE THE CONGREGATION

The public celebration of baptism and profession of faith shall take place during worship on the Lord’s Day after the Word of God has been proclaimed.

PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION

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
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 present the candidates for baptism and/or profession of faith, using the following statements as appropriate; candidates shall come forward as their names are read.

The elders of (name of congregation) have welcomed these persons who appeared before them and made profession of their Christian faith.

Naming all candidates for baptism and initial profession of faith:

NN/s (using full names) come before us to make public this profession of faith and to receive the sacrament of baptism;
Naming all baptized persons, including those making initial profession of faith, those reaffirming faith, and those transferring membership from another congregation:

NN/s *(using full names)* have been baptized into the body of Christ. In making public this profession of faith they affirm the meaning of their baptism.

If it is the congregation’s desire to note the congregations from which transferring members are being received, there may be an additional statement, “NN/s___________ are received from *(church name and location)*.”

We ask them now to declare their faith before God and Christ’s church, that we may rejoice together and welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

The minister addresses the candidates:

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.**

If children of those being received are also to be baptized, the parents are asked:
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 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 minister or elder addresses the candidates:

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 candidates 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. If baptism is not to be celebrated, proceed to the blessing and welcome.

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, 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 power of 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

If children are to receive 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 (use Christian name; omit 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.

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism. Using Christian name/s, omitting surname, 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 (use Christian name; omit 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, 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.

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, these children of God 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.

BLESSING AND WELCOME

The minister may continue by laying hands on the heads of all those being received, offering the prayer of blessing. The elders may join in the laying on of hands.

Defend, O Lord, this your servant N (use Christian name; omit surname) with your heavenly grace, that he/she may continue yours forever, and daily increase in your Spirit more and more, until he/she comes to your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The minister invites the congregation to stand:

By the Holy Spirit all who believe and are baptized receive a ministry to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to love and serve those with whom they 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.

Welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Joyfully we receive you. 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 greet the new confessing members:

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*