


Baptism Service

Where possible the sacrament of baptism should follow the reading of Scripture and the sermon or another form of proclamation of the Word.

Two forms of affirmation for the baptismal promises are included in number 3, and two others may be found in the Basis of Union, Schedule A. These are the only forms authorised for use by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

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1. Introduction
 2. Proclamation of Faith
 3. The Affirmations
 4. Statement or Testimony
 5. Prayer
 6. The Baptism
 7. Declaration of Baptism
 8. The Promises
 9. The Confirmation or Strengthening in Faith

1. Introduction

The Lord is here.

His Spirit is with us.

Jesus Christ came that we might have life
and have it in all its fullness.

In John's Gospel we read that Jesus said to Nicodemus:
'no one can enter the kingdom of God
without being born of water and Spirit.'

John 3:5

God loves us even before we come to love God ourselves. Though we cannot understand such love, God invites us in baptism to accept it with the openness and trust of a child. In the waters of baptism, God sets us as a seal upon his heart, for his love in Christ is stronger than death. Christ's journey from death to resurrection is the pattern of our lives, in union with him. Jesus himself was baptized by John in the Jordan. His baptism found fulfilment in the cross, where he gave himself for the life of the world.

Paul writes: '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 Christ 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

Other texts may also be used.

But now thus says the LORD: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

Isaiah 43:1b-2a

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:33-34

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes.

Ezekiel 36:25a, 26-27a

Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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 2:38-39

Whether we are children or adults, baptism marks the beginning of our lives as Christians and as members of the Church. In baptism we are called to take up the Cross and follow Christ in the company of all God's people from all times and places. Because we cannot do this without help, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to live as God's people and to serve God's purposes in the world. We acknowledge one baptism, in obedience to Christ. After his rising from the dead, Jesus said to his disciples:

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.

Matthew 28:18-20a

2. The Proclamation of Faith

A large candle such as an Easter (Paschal) candle may be lit.

Let us proclaim the faith of the Church through the ages:

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed (R&S 759, 760) or Statement of Faith of the United Reformed Church (Basis of Union, para.17 or para.18) may be used, or a hymn of faith sung (e.g. R&S 36, 37, 73, 272, 283, 755).

3. The Affirmations

The Lord says:
See, I am making all things new.

Revelation 21:5a

Paul says:
If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17

*By the candidate for believer's baptism
either:*

Do you believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
maker of heaven and earth,
giver of life, redeemer of the world?

I do.

Do you repent of your sins, turn away from evil,
and turn to Christ?

By God's grace, I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

I do.

*(The affirmations continue after the baptism at the point of
reception into the full privileges and responsibilities of
membership.)*

or

a form including the following elements:

- *a Trinitarian confession of faith*
- *repentance of sin*
- *a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.*

4. Statement or Testimony

A short statement or testimony may be given by the person to be baptized either here or later at confirmation.

To the parent(s) or those bringing the child to be baptized

A and B, you have come for the baptism of N
in response to the call of Christ
and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
Let us hear that you confess your faith in Christ.
Do you believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
maker of heaven and earth,
giver of life, redeemer of the world?
I/We do.

Where a child is old enough to make a response, a form such as the following may be used in addition:

N, do you believe that Jesus loves you,
and calls you to follow him?
I do.

5. Prayer

The minister may pour water into the font or baptistery.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation.
In your goodness you give us water
to sustain our life and renew the earth.
May it be for N the water of new birth.

Blessed be God forever.

Gracious God, we thank you for your love in all creation,
especially for the gift of water,
to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life.
In the beginning you moved over the waters
and to a formless void brought light and life.
You led your people through the waters of the sea
from slavery to freedom in a land of promise.
Your Son was baptized by John
in the waters of the Jordan.
You sent your Spirit upon him.
He fulfilled his baptism upon the cross
and was raised from the dead
that we might have eternal life.
Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this water,
that N, being born anew of water and the Spirit,
may remain for ever in the number of your faithful children,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit
be all honour and glory, now and forever.

Amen.

6. The Baptism

In the case of believer's baptism an elder and/or sponsors may stand with the candidate: in the case of infant baptism, with the baptismal party.

The candidate is immersed in water or has water poured over her/his head.

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

Amen.

The minister may make the sign of the Cross on the forehead of the newly-baptized person. Others (such as elders, sponsors, family members) may also do so.

N, I sign you with the Cross, the sign of Christ.

Amen.

7. Declaration of Baptism

N, child of God, God receives you by baptism into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Amen.

The congregation may say or sing the Aaronic blessing:

**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.**

Numbers 6:24-26
(R&S 420)

8. The Promises

When the newly-baptized is able to answer for her/himself, reception into the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership follows, in the form of confirmation.

We are now to receive N into the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership.

From the beginning,
believers have continued
in the worship and fellowship
of the Church.

N, do you commit yourself to this life?
I do, with God's help.

Do you accept the gift and cost
of following Christ
in your daily life and work?
I do, with God's help.

With the whole Church, will you proclaim
by word and action
the good news of God in Christ?
I will, with God's help

or a form may be used including a promise to share in the worship, fellowship and mission of the Church.

Promise by the congregation

As a community of faith, representing the whole Church,
do you welcome N and promise to share with *her/him*
what you yourselves have received,
the gift of God's love revealed in Christ?

We do with God's help.

When the newly-baptized is an infant, those bringing the child for baptism make these promises.

From early times
the Church has received
the children of believers by baptism
so that with help and support
they may grow up in Christ,
and by the grace of God
serve Christ all their days.

This child belongs to God in Christ.
Tell *her/him* of *her/his* baptism
that *she/he* may know *she/he* is baptized
and may come to make *her/his* own response
of faith and love.

Do you promise to teach N
the love of God
and bring *her/him* up in the life and worship of the Church?
I do with God's help

Promises by the sponsor(s) and/or elder(s)

Do you promise to pray for N,
and *her/his* home and family,
and to support them as you are able
as a minister of Christ's love?
I do, with God's help.

Promise by the congregation

As a community of faith, representing the whole Church,
do you welcome N and promise to share with *her/him*
what you yourselves have received,
the gift of God's love revealed in Christ?
We do with God's help.

9. The Confirmation or Strengthening in Faith

Come now to receive the laying-on of hands with prayer, to strengthen you for the work of God.

The newly-baptized person kneels. The minister and at least one elder place their hands on her/his head, as the minister prays:

God of all grace, confirm and strengthen N
in the power of the Holy Spirit,
that *she/he* may be your servant in the world
and see your glory in the world to come.

Amen.

(The minister may anoint the newly-confirmed with oil as a symbol of the anointing of God's Holy Spirit)

The newly-confirmed member stands.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the only head of the Church,
and in accordance with the decision
of this local church meeting,
we welcome you into membership
of this congregation of the United Reformed Church.
May your sharing in our life together
bring blessing to you and to us all.

The minister and elder(s) may give the right hand of fellowship as a sign of welcome. A Bible or other appropriate book and a certificate of Baptism and/or Confirmation may be presented.

**In the name of Christ we welcome you.
May we grow together in unity,
and be built up into the body of Christ in love,
to the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

A baptismal candle may be lit from an Easter (Paschal) candle and either placed on the table or given to the new member.

Shine as a light in the world.

To the glory of God.

Amen.

Hymn (e.g. R&S 368, 417-419, 421-426, 428-433)

Prayers of Intercession

These should include prayer as appropriate for the newly-baptized (and confirmed), her/his family, and the Church.

If the service does not continue with the Lord's Supper the newly-baptized (and confirmed) and those accompanying her/him may lead the congregation out of the church after the final blessing.

