

Baptism service

This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here. **There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used and these are indicated by the orange boxes.**

Where possible, the sacrament of baptism should follow the reading of Scripture and the proclamation of the Word. This service may be used for either baptism by full immersion or by pouring water over the candidate's head.

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God, the source and fount of all creation, is here.

All The Holy Spirit is with us.

Jesus Christ came that we might have life

All 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, our Creator, made each one of us, knows us and loves us. Even before we come to know God for ourselves, God's heart is full of love for us. Though such knowledge and love are more than we can imagine, God invites us, in baptism, to accept it with the openness and trust of a child. In the waters of baptism, our names are written on the heart of God, whose love is stronger than death.

Jesus himself was baptised by John in the river Jordan and that baptism found fulfilment in the cross, as he gave himself for the life of the world. Christ's journey from death to resurrection then becomes the pattern for our lives, as we live in union with him.

Short extracts from Scripture: (of which one or two might be selected)

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

Paul writes: 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised 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

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean... 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...

Ezekiel 36:25a, 26-27a

Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptised 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

Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep'.

John 21:15 ff

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

Ephesians 5:8, 14b

At whatever age we come, baptism marks a new beginning in our lives as Christians and we are made members, with others, of the one Church. In baptism we are called to take up the Cross and to follow Christ in the company of all God's people from all times and places. Because we cannot do this without the grace of God, 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 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, baptising 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

The Proclamation of Faith

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

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed or a Statement of Faith of the United Reformed Church may be used (see the statement of faith approved by General Assembly in 1997, produced here in a responsive form), or a hymn of faith may be sung.

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

We believe in the one and only God, Eternal Trinity,
from whom, through whom and for whom all created things exist.

All **God alone we worship;
in God we put our trust.**

We worship God,
source and sustainer of creation,

All **whom Jesus called Father,
whose sons and daughters we are.**

We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ,
the eternal Word of God made flesh;
who lived our human life,
died for sinners on the cross;
who was raised from the dead,
and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God;

All **who lives eternally,
as saviour and sovereign,
coming in judgement and mercy,
to bring us to eternal life.**

We worship God, ever present in the Holy Spirit;
who brings this Gospel to fruition,
assures us of forgiveness,

All **strengthens us to do God's will,
and makes us sisters and brothers of Jesus,
sons and daughters of God.**

We believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,
united in heaven and on earth:
on earth, the Body of Christ,

All **empowered by the Spirit to glorify God
and to serve humanity;
in heaven, eternally one
with the power, the wisdom and the love of God in Trinity.**

We believe that, in the fullness of time,
God will renew and gather in one
all things in heaven and on earth through Christ,
and be perfectly honoured and adored.

All **We rejoice in God who has given us being,
who shares our humanity to bring us to glory,
our source of prayer and power of praise;
to whom be glory, praise and adoration, now and evermore.**

Amen.

The Affirmations

Two forms of affirmation for the baptismal promises are included here 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.

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

An example:

Do you believe that God is the Creator of all things,
that Jesus perfectly embodies divine love,
and that the Holy Spirit moves in your heart?

I do.

Are you ready to reject all that is wrong in your life and in the world,
and turn to walk the way of Jesus Christ?

I am.

Do you accept Jesus as your Saviour and give your life to him?

I do.

Statement or Testimony

A short statement or testimony, telling the story of their coming to faith, may be given by the person to be baptised either here or later at confirmation.

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

... 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.

or

Do you believe that God is the Creator of all things,
that Jesus perfectly embodies divine love,
and that the Holy Spirit moves in your heart?

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.

Prayer

The Minister pours water into the font or baptistery.

God of love,
we thank you for the gift of water,
the foundation of life and the first of our needs.
As it fills this vessel
and washes human flesh,
open the eyes of our hearts
to see the holy meaning it carries
and to know that you are present.
Let this be a new beginning,
a recreation of a human life.
Let this be a sign of your love and mercy,
of the healing of life's wounds
and the promise of salvation.
Let this be a sacrament of your grace,
an act of commitment to Christ,
and a revealing of your Holy Spirit.

Come, living God, eternal love,
who gives form to Creation,
is seen in Jesus Christ,
and known in the Holy Spirit,
draw us this day
into the love you share
with Son and Spirit,
that ... N may be made holy
and receive a new life
as one of your own,
in the company of your people,
now and forever,

All **Amen.**

or

Blessed are you, 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.

All **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 once parted the waters of a sea
to lead your people out of slavery
to freedom in a land of promise.
Your Son was baptised in the waters of the Jordan
and your Spirit was upon him.
He fulfilled his baptism upon the cross and was raised from death
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 you and the Holy Spirit
be all honour and glory, now and forever.

All **Amen.**

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 their head.

... N ... , I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the God who loves, the beloved Christ and the very Spirit of love.

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

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

All **Amen.**

Declaration of Baptism

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

All **Amen.**

The congregation may say or sing the blessing of Aaron (Numbers 6:24-26):

May God bless and protect you,
May God smile on you and be kind to you,
May God look on you with love and bring you peace.

or

God is the One who'll bless and keep you;
yours is the radiance from God's face.
God is the One who calls and meets you;
yours is the promise of God's grace.

God is the One whose favour holds you;
yours is the gift of love to claim.
God is the One whose peace enfolds you;
yours is the bearing of God's name.

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Suggested tune: Spiritus Vitae ('O Breath of life, come sweeping through us')

or

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.

(See Rejoice and Sing 420 for a sung version of these words)

The Promises

Two forms of affirmation for the baptismal promises are included here 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.

When the newly baptised is able to answer for themselves, 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.

With the whole Church, will you proclaim by word and action the good news of God in Christ?

I will, with God's help

Other promises may be added or inserted:

eg: Do you accept the gift and cost of following Christ in your daily life and work?

I do with God's help.

or

Another form of words may be used that includes a promise to share in the worship, fellowship and mission of the church.

An example:

Will you pray and worship, at home and with others?

I will

Will you offer your gifts and time to the life of the Church and so belong with us to Christ?

I will

Will you join in telling the good news and share in service to the community?

I will.

Will you pursue justice and peace, and care for God's creation, our common home?

I will

Promise by the congregation

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

All We do with God's help.

When the newly baptised 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 ... N ... of their baptism that they may know they are baptised and may come to make their own response of faith and love.

Do you promise to teach ... N ... the love of God and bring them 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 their home and family, and to support them as you are able, sharing with them 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 them what you yourselves have received, the gift of God's love revealed in Christ?

All We do with God's help.

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 baptised person kneels. The Minister and at least one Elder place their hands on their head, as the Minister prays:

God of all grace, confirm and strengthen ... N ... in the power of the Holy Spirit, that they may shine like light in the world, grow in strength and depth of faith, and come at last to the fulness of the maturity of Christ.

All 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 offer a sign of welcome.

A Bible or other appropriate book and a certificate of Baptism and/or Confirmation may be presented.

All **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, the eternal and Holy Trinity.
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.

All **To the glory of God.
Amen.**

Hymn

Prayers of Intercession

These should include prayer as appropriate for the newly baptised (and confirmed), *their* family, and the church. If the service does not continue with the Lord's Supper, the newly baptised (and confirmed) and those accompanying them may lead the congregation out of the church after the final blessing.