

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns surrounds the central text.

**Baptism of the
Children of
Believers: Form**

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RCNZ

Baptism of the Children of Believers: Form 1

Instruction

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what the Lord has revealed to us in his Word about holy baptism can be summarised as follows.

First: Baptism teaches that we and our children are sinful from the time of conception and birth. This means that we are all under the judgment of God and for that reason cannot be members of his kingdom unless we are born again. Baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, teaches that sin has made us so impure that we must undergo a cleansing which only God can accomplish. Therefore, we ought to be displeased with ourselves, humble ourselves and turn to God who alone can save us from our sin.

Second: Baptism is a sign and seal that our sins are washed away through Jesus Christ. After rising from the dead, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.¹

Baptism into the name of the Father assures us that he makes an everlasting covenant of grace with us and adopts us as his children and heirs. Therefore, he surrounds us with his goodness and protects us from evil or turns it to our profit.

Baptism into the name of the Son assures us that we have been washed in his blood from all our sins. Christ joins us to himself so that we share in his death and resurrection. Through this union with Christ we are liberated from our sins and regarded as righteous before God.

Baptism into the name of the Holy Spirit assures us that the Spirit of God will dwell in our hearts. While living within us, the Spirit will continually work to strengthen and deepen our union with Christ. He will make real in our lives Christ's work of washing away our sins. He

will also help us each day to live the new life we have in Christ. As a result of his work within us, we shall one day be presented without the stain of sin among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

Third: Because all covenants have two sides, we who are baptised must trust this one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we reject him, we break the covenant God made with us and our baptism will testify against us. We must therefore abandon the sinful way of life and love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. If we fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s grace, nor use our weakness as an excuse to keep on sinning. “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”²

Our children should not be denied the sacrament of baptism because of their inability to understand its meaning. God’s gracious attitude towards the children of believers is revealed in what he said to Abraham, the father of all believers: “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.”³ The Apostle Peter also testifies to this with these words, “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”⁴ Therefore God formerly commanded that children be circumcised as a seal of the covenant and as a declaration that righteousness comes by faith. Jesus himself embraced little children, and blessed them;⁵ and the apostle Paul said that children of believers are holy.⁶ Since baptism has replaced circumcision, our children should be baptised as heirs of God’s kingdom and of his covenant. Their parents are responsible for teaching them the meaning of baptism. As the children mature, they are under obligation to respond to the privileges of the covenant by trusting in God and demonstrating by their lives that they belong to him.

Prayer of preparation

Let us turn to God, asking that in this baptism his name may be glorified, we may be comforted, and the church may be edified.

Almighty, eternal God, long ago you severely punished an unbelieving and unrepentant world by sending a flood. But you showed your great mercy when you saved and protected believing Noah and his family. Baptism was again signified when you drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and his whole army in the Red Sea and brought your people Israel through the sea on dry ground.

We pray, O Lord, that you will always govern this child and all our children by your Holy Spirit. We pray that in your boundless mercy you will look upon this, your child, with favour by bringing _____ *him/her* into union with your Son, Jesus Christ, through your Holy Spirit. May _____ *he/she* be buried with Christ into death and be raised with him to new life. Give _____ *him/her* true faith, firm hope and ardent love so that _____ *he/she* may joyfully bear _____ *his/her* cross as _____ *he/she* daily follows Christ.

Give this child, together with all our children, the full assurance of your grace so that when they leave this life and its constant struggle against the power of sin they may appear before the judgment seat of Christ without fear.

We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Vows

The minister addresses the parents:

Since you have presented your child for holy baptism, you are asked to answer the following questions before God and his people:

First: Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, accept the promises of God, and affirm the truth of the Christian faith which is taught in the Bible and confessed in this church of Christ?

Second: Do you believe that your child, though sinful by nature, is received by God in Christ as a member of his covenant and his church, and therefore ought to be baptised?

Third: Do you promise, in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community, to do all in your power to instruct this child in the truth of the Christian faith and to lead _____ *him/her* by your example to follow Jesus Christ?

The parents respond: We do, God helping us.

The minister addresses the congregation:

Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive _____ *name* in love; and as the Lord gives you opportunity pray for _____ *him/her*, help care for _____ *his/her* instruction in the faith, and encourage and sustain _____ *him/her* in the fellowship of believers?

Or: I charge you, people of God, receive _____ *name* in love; and as the Lord gives you opportunity pray for _____ *him/her*, help care for _____ *his/her* instruction in the faith, and encourage and sustain _____ *him/her* in the fellowship of believers.

_____ *name*, I baptise you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of thanksgiving

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank you and praise your name for having forgiven our sins through the blood of your dear Son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for uniting us with Christ through your Holy Spirit and adopting us as your children, and we thank you for sealing and confirming these blessings to us in the sacrament of baptism.

We pray, O Lord, that you will always govern this child and all our children by your Holy Spirit. Enable them to respond in faith to the gospel. May they, through your guidance, be so nurtured in the Christian faith and godliness as to grow and develop in Jesus Christ. Help them see your fatherly goodness and mercy which surrounds us

all. Make them champions of righteousness under the direction of Jesus Christ, our only teacher, king and high priest. Give them the courage to fight against and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion. May their lives become an eternal song of praise to you, the one only true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Matthew 28:19.

² 1 John 1:9.

³ Genesis 17:7.

⁴ Acts 2:39.

⁵ Mark 10:16.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:14.