

## Voicing and Enacting the Baptismal Covenant

*As persons come forward, an appropriate baptismal or confirmation hymn may be sung. See suggestions in The United Methodist Hymnal and The United Methodist Book of Worship.*

*1 The pastor makes the following statement to the congregation:*

Brothers and sisters in Christ:  
Through the Sacrament of Baptism  
we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.  
We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation  
and given new birth through water and the Spirit.  
All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

*2 If there are confirmations or reaffirmations, the pastor continues:*

Through confirmation,  
and through the reaffirmation of our faith,  
we renew the covenant declared at our baptism,  
acknowledge what God is doing for us,  
and affirm our commitment to Christ's holy Church.

Services of the baptismal covenant normally follow the sermon as a response to the Word proclaimed.

Consider using hymns and music evoking baptismal imagery throughout the service (the opening hymn in particular).

Also consider having a strong sense of movement from the pulpit to the font. This could be accomplished by having the congregation move and gather around the font themselves, or where this is not feasible, creating a processional from the pulpit/chancel to the font, including acolytes bearing cross and candles plus all those who will be directly involved in the ritual (presider, sponsors, deacon, and candidates for baptism and professing membership). Choose music to accompany this action, something easy for all to sing without needing books. Depending on the distance between the pulpit and the font, this may require a single stanza, or a repeated stanza, or several stanzas. Consider especially pieces such as "Take Me to the Water," "Wade in the Water," "Springs of Water Bless the Lord," "Water, River, Spirit Grace" (TFWS 2253) or "Shall we gather at the river."

The presider addresses the congregation, candidates and sponsors directly with strong eye contact, a clear and inviting voice, extending hands in a gesture of invitation. (Have a deacon or acolyte hold the book).

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES

*3 A representative of the congregation presents the candidates with the appropriate statements:*

- I present Name(s) for baptism.
- I present Name(s) for confirmation.
- I present Name(s) to reaffirm their faith.
- I present Name(s) who come(s) to this congregation from the ---- Church.

*If desired, Thanksgiving over the Water (section 10) may precede the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith.*

*At this or some later point in the service, persons may add to their vows a personal witness to their Christian faith and experience.*

RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

*4 Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ. Parents or other sponsors reaffirm these vows for themselves while taking the responsibilities of sponsorship. Candidates for confirmation profess for themselves the solemn vows that were made at their baptism. The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors and those candidates who can answer for themselves:*

The representatives from among the baptized, the laity, who present candidates are those who have helped to prepare them—either the sponsor or a person who has led the preparation process. This could also be the lay leader of the congregation if that person has this sort of preparatory function where you are. The person who presents the candidates should be one who helps form them, not necessarily a member of the nuclear family.

All persons seeking to become professing members of the United Methodist Church are to participate in the entire baptismal covenant (2008 Book of Discipline, Paragraphs 214 and 225). Persons joining from another UM congregation are also present at this time and may also reaffirm the baptismal covenant, but are primarily expected to affirm the vows of local congregation membership (#15, below).

The full name is used in this presentation. The candidates face the congregation.

Note on Rubrics: Sponsors and parents do NOT answer for the children or others who cannot answer for themselves. Sponsors and parents are answering *for themselves* as a sign of the covenant community in which those being baptized will be living. Persons who have not professed the Christian faith and do not intend to do so are not expected to take these vows and should not do so.

Similarly, confirmands and others making a first public profession of the faith in the baptismal covenant are not making vows that others made on their behalf earlier. Rather, they are affirming the vows of baptism

<p>On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you: Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin? <b>I do.</b></p> <p>Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves? <b>I do.</b></p> <p>Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?</p>	<p>by which the Christian community lives.</p> <p>The baptismal vows and the confession of faith (Apostles Creed) indicate the necessary and ongoing shape of Christian discipleship. As such, they should be the focal point of confirmation, baptism, and new member preparation classes. See Ron Anderson's essay, "The Christian Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" later in this volume for more details.</p> <p>These are also awful questions—they are big and powerful. Consider adding, "with the church and by the grace of God" before "I do" or asking other questions, evocative of the vows, and having candidates respond with the vow proper.</p> <p>Renunciation is a turning and a breaking of allegiance. Consider asking the candidates to turn physically, facing the congregation's left (liturgical West), for this vow. Candidates should be prepared to respond boldly and audibly. Gracious prompting by the presider may be called for, even when there has been good preparation. Candidates need not be holding books.</p> <p>This question in particular should be followed by space to take the renunciation in. Consider counting to five.</p> <p>Consider having the candidate turn to face the congregation's right (liturgical East) to embrace the second vow (acceptance).</p> <p>For the third vow, the candidate faces the presider (at either liturgical North or East, depending on the positioning of the font), standing on the opposite side of the font from the candidate.</p>
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<p><b>I do.</b></p> <p><i>5 The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors of candidates not able to answer for themselves:</i>  Will you nurture these children (persons) in Christ's holy Church, that by your teaching and example they may be guided to accept God's grace for themselves, to profess their faith openly, and to lead a Christian life?</p> <p><b>I will.</b></p> <p><i>6 The pastor addresses candidates who can answer for themselves:</i>  According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?</p> <p><b>I will.</b></p> <p><i>7 If those who have answered for themselves have sponsors, the pastor addresses the sponsors:</i>  Will you who sponsor these candidates support and encourage them in their Christian life?</p> <p><b>I will.</b></p> <p><i>8 The pastor addresses the congregation, and the congregation responds:</i>  Do you, as Christ's body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ?</p> <p><b>We do.</b></p> <p>Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in your care?</p> <p><b>With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God,</b></p>	<p>Parents and sponsors respond here as part of the congregation. Presider should place emphasis on the word <b>"your"</b> in the phrase "by <b>your</b> teaching and example."</p> <p>Pastor may need to act as a bit of a stage manager here, adding words to the effect of: "And now to the candidates who speak for themselves I ask:"</p> <p>Though the rubric indicates that those who answer for themselves <i>might</i> have sponsors as an option, we strongly commend sponsors for all candidates, whether for baptism or professing membership.</p> <p>Presider shifts focus to the entire congregation. Pastor may raise eyes or hands to help engage the congregation in this. If not already facing the congregation, pastor now turns toward the congregation.</p> <p>Here the presider may ask the congregation to stand. Consider reframing the congregation's response (in bold) into a series of three questions instead of one long response to the first piece posed as a question. For example, "Will you proclaim the good news, and live according to the example of Christ," followed by the congregational response, We will.</p>
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**and be found faithful in their service to others.**

**We will pray for them,  
that they may be true disciples  
who walk in the way that leads to life.**

*9 The Apostles' Creed in threefold question-and-answer form appeared at least as early as the third century as a statement of faith used in baptisms and has been widely used in baptisms ever since. The candidate(s), sponsor(s), and local congregation join with the universal Church across the ages in this historic affirmation of the Christian faith. The pastor addresses all, and the congregation joins the candidates and their parents and sponsors in responding:*

Let us join together in professing the Christian faith  
as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

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?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.]**

Do you believe in 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.]**

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

*10 If there are baptisms, or if water is to be used for reaffirmation, the water may be poured ceremonially into the font at this time in such a way that the congregation can see and hear the water. This prayer recalls scriptural images and meanings of Holy Baptism and is comparable to the Great Thanksgiving at Holy Communion:*

Invite the congregation to stand if they are not already doing so.

Although parts of the universal church have worked at more expansive ways of address to God, the language of this creed belongs to the whole church, and should be used in its integrity. Other forms of address to God in hymns and prayers may be used elsewhere in the liturgy.

Another appropriate way, especially when persons do not have access to a book, it may be proper for the presider or the deacon (if present) to offer the text of the entire creed with the questions—"Do you believe in (words of the Creed)" followed by the response of the candidates, "I do so believe and place my trust."

The congregation normally remains standing for the thanksgiving over the water, with hands free. It is better to have someone hold the book for the presider, both so the presider can lead this prayer with his or her whole body and because the presiders

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
Let us pray.

Eternal Father:  
When nothing existed but chaos,  
    you swept across the dark waters  
    and brought forth light.  
In the days of Noah  
    you saved those on the ark through water.

hands will get wet during this prayer (touching the water). Do not simply place the book on or at the edge of the font, as it may get fall in, fall down, or get wet.

Other items—candles, towels, and chrisms should also be held by assistants. Deacon pours water into the font. Deacon can also hold the oil—deacon direct the action of the assistants.

If a paschal candle has not already been lit, do so now. Preferably it will have been done at the beginning of worship at the entrance.

Plan to use generous amounts of water, and be sure there are towels a change of clothes or waders as appropriate.

An elder or licensed local pastor leads the prayer. So as not to obscure the prayer, water is poured before the prayer of thanksgiving begins. No comment is needed. The point is to see and hear the water.

The presider prays in the “orans” position (palms up, arms extended to sides, bent at elbow) standing near the font. If an immersion font or pool is used, the pastor may stand near or in the font, if appropriate. Congregation may be invited to join in orans as well.

After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow.  
When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt,  
you led them to freedom through the sea.  
Their children you brought through the Jordan  
to the land which you promised.

**\*\*Sing to the Lord, all the earth.  
Tell of God's mercy each day.**

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus,  
nurtured in the water of a womb.  
He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit.  
He called his disciples  
to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection  
and to make disciples of all nations.

**\*\*Declare his works to the nations, his glory among all the people.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit,  
to bless this gift of water and those who receive it,  
to wash away their sin  
and clothe them in righteousness  
throughout their lives,  
that, dying and being raised with Christ,  
they may share in his final victory.

**\*\*All praise to you, Eternal Father,  
through your Son Jesus Christ,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit  
lives and reigns for ever. Amen.**

#### BAPTISM WITH LAYING ON OF HANDS

*11 As each candidate is baptized, the pastor uses the Christian name(s), but not the surname:*

Christian Name(s), I baptize you in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Immediately after the administration of the water, the pastor places hands on the candidate's head and invokes the work of the Holy Spirit. Other persons, including baptized members of the candidate's family, may join the pastor in this action. During the Laying on of Hands, the pastor says:*

Using a call and response setting for musical responses allows the congregation to offer their praise without depending on holding a book.

The pastor may make gestures toward the water, lowering palms over the water palms down, or place hands in the water at the words over the water, then return to orans at the words over the people.

The hands of the presider return to orans or offer the sign of the cross at the words "dying and being raised with Christ."

The act of baptism may be offered by immersion or pouring. The form of the prayer suggests three-fold immersion or pouring. As with the Apostles Creed, the formula of words for baptism is shared by the entire church, and should be offered without alteration.

If there are several candidates, the pastor may ask, "What is this candidate's name" to reduce any possible confusion or error.

Name, the Holy Spirit work within you,  
that being born through water and the Spirit,  
you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*If desired, one or more of the following acts may be added; but these should not be so emphasized as to seem as important as, or more important than, God's sign given in the water itself.*

*a) The pastor may trace on the forehead of each newly baptized person the sign of the cross in silence or with the words: "Name, [child of God], you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." Olive oil may be used in this action, following the biblical custom anointing prophets (1 Kings 19:16), priests (Exodus 29:7), and kings (1 Kings 1:39). Jesus' titles Christ and Messiah both mean "Anointed One," and the New Testament repeatedly calls Christ our High Priest and King. Christians in baptism become members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), which is a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Anointing at baptism is a reminder that all Christians are anointed into this royal priesthood.*

*b) New clothing is sometimes presented to those just baptized, particularly in the case of infants, as a symbol that we "have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27) as one would put on new clothing. Such clothing is traditionally white, suggesting the "white robes" in Revelation 7:9 -14. Words such as these may be used: "Receive these new clothes as a token of the new life that is given in Christ Jesus."*

*c) A lighted baptismal candle may be presented to the newly baptized, with such words as: "Let your light so shine that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father in heaven." The candle may be presented to the parents or sponsors of baptized children, in which case "others" may be changed to "this child" or "these children." It is appropriate to light the baptismal candle in the home each year on the anniversary of baptism as a reminder of the grace of God offered through baptism. A baptismal candle bears either a Christian symbol or no decoration at all; it should not be confused with ornate birthday candles sold commercially to mark a child's birthdays. The candle may be lighted from the paschal candle or from one of the candles on or near the Lord's table.*

*d) A certificate of baptism may be presented to the newly baptized. When all candidates have been baptized, the pastor invites the congregation to welcome them:*

a) This ritual action is not the application of water, but the laying on of hands. There should be a distinct break between the two ritual actions of baptism and laying on of hands. The presider may dry hands between the application of water and the laying on of hands. Although the current rubrics offer anointing with oil merely as an option, we strongly commend it as an action continuous with ancient Christian practice.

The laying on of hands and anointing with oil is intended for all the newly baptized. (Add a recipe for making Chrism).

The congregation may sing an acclamation (such as "You have put on Christ" or Alleluias) during the presentation of secondary signs such as candles, clothing, and certificates.

While other ritual actions may also be included, these should not overshadow the primary rites of baptism and the laying on of hands. We commend that any such additional ritual be offered to all candidates, regardless of age. All the newly baptized are newborns in Christ.

Now it is our joy to welcome  
our new sisters and brothers in Christ.

**Through baptism**

**you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit  
into God's new creation  
and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood.  
We are all one in Christ Jesus.  
With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you  
as members of the family of Christ.**

CONFIRMATION OR REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*12 Here water may be used symbolically in ways that cannot be interpreted as baptism, as the pastor says:*

Remember your baptism and be thankful. **Amen.**

*Such ways of using water include the following:*

- a) Persons being confirmed or reaffirming faith may be invited to touch the water and, if desired, touch their foreheads with a moistened finger.*
- b) The pastor may scoop up a handful of water and let it flow back into the font so that it is heard and seen.*
- c) The pastor may touch the water and mark each person on the forehead with the sign of the cross.*

*As the pastor, and others if desired, place hands on the head of each person being confirmed or reaffirming faith, the pastor says to each:*

Name, the Holy Spirit work within you,  
that having been born through water and the Spirit,  
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*13 When there is a congregational reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant, water may be used symbolically in ways that cannot be interpreted as baptism, as the pastor says:*  
Remember your baptism and be thankful. Amen.

*Such ways of using water include the following:*

- a) Members of the congregation may be invited to touch the water and, if desired, touch their foreheads with a moistened finger.*
- b) The pastor may scoop up a handful of water up and let it flow back into the font so that it is heard and seen.*
- c) A very small amount of water may be sprinkled toward the congregation, not falling directly on them as would be the case in baptism by sprinkling. This may be done by dipping the end of a small evergreen branch into the font and shaking it toward the congregation. It may be seen as representing biblical sprinkling with hyssop for purification (Exodus 12:22; Psalm 51:7) and sprinkling as a sign of renewal (Ezekiel 36:25 -26).*
- d) The pastor may touch the water and mark each person on the forehead with the sign*

After each baptism, or act of reaffirmation, simple applause, a musical response (Amen, Alleluia, "Come out the Wilderness," etc.) may be offered before proceeding to the following actions.

Alternatively, a translation of this text from some ancient sources might be offered: "Remember that you are baptized, and be thankful." This better captures the intent at this point—that of remembering the fact of one's baptism, not one's individual experience of it.

Persons who are not being received into professing membership may be seated.

The use of water at this point is intended for any who are professing their faith, whether for the first time ("confirmation") or as part of joining the professing fellowship of this congregation from another denomination.

*of the cross.*

#### RECEPTION INTO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*14 If there are persons coming into membership in The United Methodist Church from other denominations who have not yet been presented, they may be presented at this time.*

*The pastor addresses all those transferring their membership into The United Methodist Church, together with those who, through baptism or confirmation, have just professed their own faith:*

As members of Christ's universal Church,  
will you be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church,  
and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries?

**I will.**

#### RECEPTION INTO THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

*15 If there are persons joining this congregation from other United Methodist congregations who have not yet been presented, they may be presented at this time.*

*The pastor addresses all those transferring membership into the congregation, together with those who, through baptism or confirmation, have just professed their own faith:*

As members of this congregation,  
will you faithfully participate in its ministries  
by your prayers, your presence,  
your gifts, your service  
and your witness?

**I will.**

It is important that the presider's hands remain dry for this part of the ritual so as not to confuse baptism with its reaffirmation. Oil may also be used. We do not commend the action described in d), as these gestures are too closely associated with the baptismal actions in many congregations. Better—get people to come and use the water as they may choose while singing.

Those being received into the United Methodist Church continue standing.

The 2008 Book of Discipline requires that all candidates for professing membership will have participated in the entire baptismal covenant up to this point.

Persons become members of the church catholic by baptism. When persons become professing members, they become professing members in our particular expression of church (The United Methodist Church), and live out the commitment most intimately in the context of a local congregation and other groups related to it.

To help make the connection between church membership and baptism, it may be ideal to receive all professing or baptized members on Sundays when baptism is also celebrated.

These two paragraphs (14 and 15) are not intended to be used for persons to become baptized members of the United Methodist Church or a local congregation, but only for those becoming professing members.

Nor are they to be used without what precedes (the whole of the baptismal covenant, vows, creed, thanksgiving over the water, actions with water, etc) for persons becoming professing members. Remember that these are not the only vows of professing membership. The entire baptismal covenant is required by the Discipline.

Persons who may answer for themselves but do not wish to become a professing member in a local congregation of the United Methodist Church may become a baptized member by a transfer of letter. See paragraph 225.

In the case of children who can or choose to speak for themselves, but have not yet completed a process of formation (such as confirmation classes), plan not to use these paragraphs. These should be received as baptized members, not professing members, until it is clear they both intend and understand on the level of practice (not just intellectual assent) what it means to live into the baptismal covenant.

COMMENDATION AND WELCOME

*16 The pastor addresses the congregation:*

Members of the household of God,  
I commend these persons to your love and care.  
Do all in your power to increase their faith,  
confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

*The congregation responds:*

**We give thanks for all that God has already given you  
and we welcome you in Christian love.**

**As members together with you  
in the body of Christ  
and in this congregation  
of The United Methodist Church,  
we renew our covenant  
faithfully to participate  
in the ministries of the Church  
by our prayers, our presence,  
our gifts, our service and our witness,  
that in everything God may be glorified  
through Jesus Christ.**

*The pastor addresses those baptized, confirmed, or received:*

The God of all grace,  
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,  
establish you and strengthen you  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
that you may live in grace and peace.

*One or more laypersons, including children, may join the pastor in acts of welcome and peace. Baptized children may be welcomed by a kiss of peace or other acts or words immediately following Baptism with Laying on of Hands.*

*An appropriate hymn, stanza, or response may be sung. See suggestions. Hymns listed in UMH under Commitment may be used on occasions other than baptism.*

*Appropriate thanksgivings and intercessions for those who have participated in these acts*

The presider's voice here should be direct and gracious. During the commendation, the presider should make intentional eye contact both with those who are coming into professing membership in this Church and with the congregation.

Note that this is not a prayer or a responsive reading, but a pledge by the congregation to the newly received professing members.

This prayer of blessing is directed by the presider over all persons newly baptized and/or received as professing members. This is not intended as the end of the worship service, but of the baptismal ritual within a full service of Word and Table.

During this blessing, the presider may raise a hand in a gesture of blessing or make a sign of the cross over the persons being blessed. The presider may also invite the congregation to do likewise.

The rubrics here are confusing. The intended next ritual action is the prayers of the people. Then the Invitation to the Lord's Table (which does not require a confession of sin, since the baptismal covenant has just been affirmed by all), then the peace, the offering, and the Great Thanksgiving.

*should be included in the Concerns and Prayers that follow*

*It is most fitting that the service continue with Holy Communion, in which the union of the new members with the body of Christ is most fully expressed. The new members, including children, may receive first.*

As suggested here, those who are newly baptized may receive first.

If baptism is offered by immersion, some time may be needed to enable the presider and candidates to change before celebrating Holy Communion. A deacon, lay leader or other layperson may lead the intercessions and singing while others change.

When the entire liturgy is concluded, all things blessed but not consumed (water, bread, wine or juice) should be returned reverently to the earth at the soonest occasion.