



Baptism at
Sojourn Montrose

Spring 2023

Table of Contents

On Baptism at Sojourn Montrose.....	3
Summary.....	3
Unified Belief Regarding Baptism.....	3
On Children in The Church.....	4
Does Baptism Save?.....	4
Covenant Theology Is Our Central Point of Sacramental Unity.....	5
Brief Explanation of Believer’s Baptism (Or Credobaptism).....	5
Brief Explanation of Infant Baptism (Or Covenantal Paedobaptism).....	6
Leaning into Unity.....	6
Raising Children at Sojourn Montrose.....	6
Practicing our Unity.....	6
Sojourn Montrose Baptism Policies.....	8
Baptism Policies FAQ:.....	8
Liturgical Services for Baptisms and Dedications.....	9
Liturgy for the Baptism of an Infant.....	10
Liturgy for Baby Dedication.....	12
Liturgy for the Baptism of an Adult Convert.....	13
Liturgy for the Baptism of a Professing Child.....	15
Baptism Resolution.....	17
On the Practice of Covenantal Paedobaptism at Sojourn Montrose.....	19
Appendix.....	26
On the Baptism of Believers at Sojourn Montrose.....	28

On Baptism at Sojourn Montrose

A Primer on the Dual-Practice of Infant Baptism with Believer's Baptism

Summary

At Sojourn Houston, we have always fought against baptism being a divisive issue.¹ Yet, for the first ten years of our existence, Sojourn Montrose has exclusively practiced believer's baptism. After more than a year of deliberation, study, and prayer, the elders have decided to become a dual-practicing congregation, adopting covenantal infant baptism as an acceptable practice within our congregation along with believer's baptism.

Introduction

As adherents to historic, reformed, and covenantal theology, Sojourn Montrose believes that sacraments – baptism and the Lord's Supper – are essential to the life and ministry of the Church. Yet, within the broad tradition of reformed theology, there are differing convictions regarding the Sacraments, most notably the debate regarding proper candidates for baptism.²

Following the Reformation, there have been two major, differing views of baptism within reformed protestant Christianity - covenantal paedobaptism (infant baptism) and credobaptism (believer's baptism). Baptism has been a controversial and divisive issue in the Church. It continues to divide churches that otherwise could share beautiful communion. This change in local policy prevents division and strives for joyful and glorious unity with one another.

Unified Belief Regarding Baptism

The sacrament of Holy baptism is the initiation ritual of the Church. It acts as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, which was fulfilled and made new in the ministry and passion of Jesus Christ.

The Bible commands us to wash new Christians in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.³ Baptism is a ritual washing that signals our adoption into the family of God, our being united to Jesus and his Body,⁴ our cleansing from sin,⁵ and our consecration into the priesthood and temple.⁶ In short, baptism welcomes us into the Church. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus is present in baptism, and he is pouring out his grace and building up the faith of his people.

¹ Sojourn Houston is the family of Churches that Sojourn Montrose is part of. Sojourn Houston Churches are free to practice covenantal paedobaptism or credobaptism, so long as they practice one or both.

² See the Westminster Confession of Faith and the London Baptist Confession of 1689

³ Matt 28:19

⁴ Rom 6:3-5; Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 2:12

⁵ Mk 1:4; Tit 3:5

⁶ Heb 10:22

Baptized people should remember and contemplate their baptisms regularly because God wants to remind us continually that we are his cherished children, that we have been united to the death and resurrection of Jesus, that we live by his Spirit, that we belong to the Church, that we are called to build his kingdom, and that glory awaits us when Jesus returns to make all things new!⁷

On Children in The Church

The elders at Sojourn Montrose unquestionably agree that children are a blessing from the Lord.⁸ Furthermore, we believe that children born into Christian homes are recipients of a particular grace by nature of being part of the life of the Church, learning the truth about God from their youth, and seeing models of Christian living in their household and in the household of faith. Children are also instruments of grace, teaching us about faith, humility, and the nature of God's care for us. In all of this, the children among us are to be cherished, nurtured, taught, disciplined, and encouraged to take hold of Christ as their only hope in life and in death.

Does Baptism Save?

In short, no. We do not believe that a person is saved, given the Spirit, or forgiven their sins simply because they have been baptized with water.

While baptism is a means of grace, through which God communicates his promises and love both vividly and helpfully, it is not *the* means of salvation. Peter tells us that baptism is an “appeal to God for a clean conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus”⁹ and that it saves us as an appeal.

In other words, we are saved as we appeal to God for forgiveness and new life through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism signifies that our sins are washed away in Christ, our new and

We use the following terms in this document: **covenant membership**, **visible church**, and **invisible church**. They are briefly explained below.

Covenant membership is the way that we count our members at Sojourn. Covenant members at Sojourn agree to uphold certain commitments as it relates to the ministry of the gospel and Christian living, while elders agree to uphold standards of care for the flock among us.

Visible church is a term describing the entire Christian Church across the globe at any given time. Definitions of the visible church (or the covenant community) vary based upon theological convictions, but generally is meant to describe all baptized Christians who are part of the life of the Church. Paedobaptists believe that baptized infants are members of the visible church. Credobaptists believe that the visible church are those who have made a valid profession of repentance and faith.

Invisible church is a term used to indicate the entire elect people of God who will be saved in the last days and members of the covenant community for all eternity. Members of the visible church who have true faith until the end are also members of the invisible church.

⁷ *Sojourn Houston Covenant Membership Curriculum, 2021.*

⁸ Ps 37:26

⁹ 1 Pet 3:21

eternal life has begun, and the Holy Spirit has come upon us. All of these realities are given to the baptized person through faith in Jesus Christ.

Covenant Theology Is Our Central Point of Sacramental Unity

At Sojourn Montrose, our elders believe that the primary and concrete way God relates to his people is through covenant. He established a covenant with Adam in the Garden and has always had a covenant with mankind,¹⁰ who are bound to him by *his* promises, *his* faithfulness, and *his* blessing. Therefore, Christians are God's covenant people as they are united to Christ. As a member of the covenant community, a Christian is an heir to the promises of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, and all the Spiritual Blessings. Membership in the visible church is membership in the covenant community. Salvation, of course, ultimately comes by the grace of God alone through faith in Christ alone.

So, all of our elders believe baptism is the sign and seal of the covenant of grace. All of our elders believe that baptism is the initiation into the covenant community. All of our elders believe that baptism communicates the work of Christ on our behalf, namely his death and resurrection. And all our elders believe that real spiritual blessings – or grace – are conveyed in baptism. On these things, your elders agree.

The differences come in decisions regarding the appropriate recipients of baptism in light of this covenantal theology.¹¹

Brief Explanation of Believer's Baptism (Or Credobaptism)

Credobaptism contends that baptism marks the entrance to the visible church when a person shows signs of faith and new birth. Therefore, self-aware adults and children receive baptism. Baptism comes after a person hears the gospel message and responds to it with the God-given gift of repentance, belief, and faith. Reserving professing baptism for only those who make a valid profession of repentance and faith is because, for the Credobaptist, those who profess faith make up the visible church.

Sojourn Montrose accepts, welcomes, and celebrates the baptism of Adults and self-aware children after they become Christians.

¹⁰ God made explicit covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David in the Old Testament. We now are on the graceful receiving-end of the New Covenant made with us through Jesus.

¹¹ There are many nuanced differences in the two positions represented by our elders, but at the core is a united covenant theology which informs our sacramental theology as well as the rest of the ministry of the Gospel at Sojourn Montrose. Central to the discussion on baptism is a debate regarding who makes up the visible church or covenant community. The invisible church are all those who will be saved on the last day; the elect of God. All of our elders agree upon this point. But, we disagree on who makes up the visible church.

Brief Explanation of Infant Baptism (Or Covenantal Paedobaptism)

Covenantal paedobaptists contend that the visible church includes those who profess faith and also their children.¹² Therefore, baptism should be applied to the children of believers as a sign and seal of the New Covenant, just as infants received circumcision as a covenantal sign of grace in the Old Testament. These infants are then to be raised up in the Church to take hold of all of the promises proclaimed in their baptism through a lifelong faith in Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

Sojourn Montrose accepts, welcomes, and celebrates families who wish to baptize their infant or young children.

Leaning into Unity

We are making this change not because we think baptism is unimportant but because it is imperative. Practicing and administering the sacraments is central to the ministry of a local church and should be done with great care and consideration. As such, there are certain forms and convictions regarding baptism that we do not and will not approve of or practice. Yet, regarding Covenantal Credobaptism and Paedobaptism, we believe our unity is best displayed and experienced in diversity. Both views are historically reformed and orthodox, rooted in a deep conviction in the authority of Scripture. And so, as we may disagree, we will not be divided.

Raising Children at Sojourn Montrose

We understand that practicing both forms of baptism mentioned above may need some clarification. However, we also see this as an opportunity for our congregation to lean into the importance of raising our children in the faith. Whether a family chooses to have their infant baptized or wait until that child professes faith, we want all of our families to rely upon God's grace and take the calling of parenthood seriously. Furthermore, we hope that our entire congregation will join in the blessed task of discipling our little ones and modeling a life of godliness for them.

Practicing our Unity

So, what does all of this mean in practice?

Families with children among us can choose to have their infants baptized or dedicated, and we will gladly accommodate both convictions. We will gladly walk with you as you seek to understand baptism more and how that relates to raising children in the faith. And we will continue to baptize adult converts and unbaptized adult Christians.

¹² The administration of covenantal promises in the Bible are deeply familial in nature. This includes the blessings and curses which follow. Our father, Adam, has brought the curse of death upon us all. Our new Adam, Jesus, has brought life and grace to us all. Similarly, the blessings of covenant faith and faithfulness are given to a young child on the basis of their parent(s) faith and faithfulness.

We will practice our unity through genuine love and respect amidst a diversity of convictions regarding baptism. We will avoid all divisive behavior, including joking and sarcasm.

For more detailed information, please see the attached document titled “Sojourn Montrose Baptism Policies.”

Sojourn Montrose Baptism Policies

Baptism Policies FAQ:

Who can administer baptism at Sojourn Montrose?

Elders will oversee all administration of the sacraments at Sojourn Montrose, and the default will be that an elder will apply the waters of baptism to a candidate. However, important figures in the candidate's life (so long as they are covenant members at Sojourn Montrose) may assist in the process if specifically requested.

In what venue will baptisms be administered at Sojourn Montrose?

We will offer baptisms at gatherings available to the whole congregation, generally in the context of a Sunday Gathering. However, we are open to doing baptisms at other events involving the entire congregation. Baptism is a gift to the Church, so we want to facilitate as many opportunities as possible for God to bless the Church with Baptism. We allow for the discretion of our elders in any extraordinary circumstances.

I was baptized as an infant, or before I actually understood the gospel, and I would like to be re-baptized. Can I be baptized again at Sojourn Montrose?

At Sojourn Montrose, we hesitate to baptize a person a second time. We believe that baptism is to be administered only once. Even so, we will take these situations on a case-by-case basis.

Is baptism required for Covenant Membership at Sojourn Montrose?

Yes. We believe baptism is the initiation ritual of the Church and thus marks the inauguration of membership. So, if you have not yet been baptized and desire to join us as a covenant member, we will schedule your baptism upon signing the membership covenant.

Are infants considered Covenant Members? Is the answer different for baptized versus dedicated infants?

Covenant membership at Sojourn includes entire households, with adult members signing the covenant, thus bearing the responsibility for the children in their homes. The baptism status of a child does not affect this answer. Our elders consider it our responsibility to shepherd the flock of God among us, which includes both adults and children.

At what age can a child be baptized based upon profession?

There is no minimum age requirement for children in credo-baptist homes to be baptized. One or more elders will meet with the child and help the family discern the child's profession as orthodox and genuine. If the child shows genuine repentance and faith, the Elders will encourage baptism.

When can my child appropriately participate in the Lord's Supper?

While baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Church, communion is a covenant-renewal ceremony. Therefore, communion is for those who believe upon Christ for salvation, and who

are of an age and spiritual maturity to reasonably examine themselves for sin and to discern the Body of Christ.¹³ Thus, communion at Sojourn Montrose will be reserved for baptized and professing members of the global Church. Parents shall request a meeting with an elder to discuss their child's readiness to partake in the Lord's Supper.¹⁴

Will Sojourn Montrose baptize any infant?

No. Sojourn Montrose will only baptize infants and small children whose parents or guardians are covenant members at Sojourn. If you have questions about your specific circumstances, we would be happy to discuss this further.

What is the mode of baptism at Sojourn Montrose?

Sojourn Montrose will use both sprinkling (or affusion) and immersion for baptisms. Sprinkling (or affusion) will be applied to infants, and most – if not all – other candidates will be baptized by immersion.

Will Sojourn Montrose baptize people with disabilities which prevent them from making a profession of faith or having an intellectual understanding of the Christian gospel?

The short answer is, "Yes!" While we would handle this case-by-case, we would never prevent anyone from being baptized based on their abilities. Christ is the able one in whom all are saved!

Will infant baptisms and baby dedications take place on the same day?

For the sake of clarity and celebrating each event, we will not baptize and dedicate infants on the same day.

Liturgical Services for Baptisms and Dedications

All baptisms will begin with a brief explanation of the sacrament of baptism to the congregation, followed by an introduction to the baptismal candidate and their family (if applicable). In the case of baptisms on the basis of profession, whether a child or an adult convert, we will invite the candidate to share a brief testimony.

The liturgical services for all of these events can be seen in the pages below.

¹³ 1 Cor 11:27-32. "Body" in this passage is meant to be understood with a double-meaning. Before coming to the table, we are to discern our place and role within the body of Christ (i.e. the Church), and to discern that Christ's body is our means of salvation and the spiritual food upon which we feast.

¹⁴ For credobaptist families, this will be the same conversation as that which is had in preparation for baptism.

Liturgy for the Baptism of an Infant

Baptisms for infants¹⁵ will involve a verbal commitment from the guardians and household of the candidate, a verbal commitment from the congregation, and a charge from an elder to the household and the congregation.

Introduction of Candidate and (His) Family:

I present to you _____, (son) of _____ and _____ to receive the sacrament of Holy baptism.

Questions for Parents/Guardians and Household:

1. Do you acknowledge your child's need for the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit? *We do.*
2. As your child is baptized into Christ and his kingdom, does your household renounce Satan and all forces of evil, both natural and spiritual? *We do.*
3. Do you claim God's covenant promises in (his) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his) salvation, as you do for your own? *We do.*
4. Do you now unreservedly present your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before (him) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him), that you will teach (him) the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? *We do, and we ask God to help us.*

Question for the Congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support this child and (his) family, 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, and we ask God to help us.*

Charge for the Household and the Congregation

Mom, Dad, (replace with appropriate guardian titles if necessary),

It is your duty to raise this child such that you encourage and foster love for and faith in our Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth. Teach (him) the word of God as you read it to (him) in your home. You are to instruct him in the principles of our holy religion, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as well as faithful confessions of faith. You are to pray with and for (him). And, you are to set an example of piety and godliness before (him); and endeavor, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

_____ Parish and all of Sojourn Montrose,

It is your duty to come alongside this family to help love, discipline, teach, and set an example of Christian living for this child. Pray for (him), speak good news to (him), and support this family according to the grace given to you in Christ that we may see this sweet child grow up into the fullness of faith in our Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth.

The Covenant Promise and Baptism

¹⁵ The term *infant* can be understood to also represent any young child who is baptized prior to a profession of faith.

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

(Acts 2:39; Genesis 17:7; Acts 16:31)

Family, what is your household's profession?

That Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior!

Upon this profession and the covenant promises of God:

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

To the Child:

You have been sealed with Holy Baptism, which signifies all the promises of God to you and all his people. You are set apart to serve him, love him, and trust him forever. We pray that you take hold of Christ by faith for all the days of your life.

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.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the waters of baptism which are a sign to us of your precious and very great promises fulfilled and given to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Allow all of us to take hold of him by faith, to remember the remission of our sins signed in the washing; and to remember that you have given us new life as we trust in you, are buried with you in baptism and are raised with you forever. Amen.

Singing of *Jesus Loves [You]*:

Following both a baptism and a dedication, the congregation, acting together in faith, sings to the child:

*Jesus loves you, this we know,
For the Bible tells us so.
Little ones to him belong,
You are weak but he is strong.*

*Yes, Jesus loves you,
Yes, Jesus loves you,
Yes, Jesus loves you,
The Bible tells us so*

Liturgy for Baby Dedication

Introduction of Candidate and (His) Family:

I present to you _____, (son) of _____ and _____ to be dedicated to God in the context of the Church at Sojourn Montrose.

When a child is dedicated to the Lord at Sojourn Montrose, the simple service includes the following questions for the parent or parents:

1. Do you acknowledge that this child is a gift from God, for God? *We do.*
2. Do you promise, relying on God's grace, to set an example, before your child, of living gladly for Christ as Savior and Lord? *We do.*
3. Do you promise to teach them God's word as you read it in your home? *We do.*
4. Do you further promise, relying on God's grace, to pray for this child and train him/her for a lifetime of serving the Lord Jesus Christ, according to Scripture? *We do, and we ask God to help us.*

_____, your parents, who love you dearly, lift you up before the Lord as fully dedicated to his purpose of grace and glory in your generation.

To the Congregation:

Now, Sojourn Montrose, we commit to walking with these parents and children as part of our community for faith. So, we too will dedicate ourselves to teaching, nurturing, and praying for these children and parents.

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support this child and (his) family, 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, and we ask God to help us.*

Prayer:

With joy and thanksgiving, as Christ's Church, and with your help Lord, allow us to love, encourage, and support these children and parents as they follow Christ and train their children in our faith. Lord, would you complete the work of salvation in these children, and would there not be a day where they don't feel your love and grace. Amen.

Singing of *Jesus Loves [You]*:

After both a baptism and a dedication, the congregation, acting together in faith, sings to the child:

*Jesus loves you, this we know,
For the Bible tells us so.
Little ones to him belong,
You are weak but he is strong.*

*Yes, Jesus loves you,
Yes, Jesus loves you,
Yes, Jesus loves you,
The Bible tells us so*

Liturgy for the Baptism of an Adult Convert

Baptisms for Adult Converts will involve a verbal profession of faith from the candidate, a verbal commitment from the congregation, and a charge from an elder to the candidate and the congregation.

Introduction of Candidate:

I present to you _____ to receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Questions for Candidate:

1. Do you acknowledge your need for the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit? *I do.*
2. As you are baptized into Christ and his kingdom, do you renounce Satan and all forces of evil, both natural and spiritual? *I do.*
3. Do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation? *I do.*
4. Do you commit to a life of repentance and faith, in which you will put off the old and sinful things of your flesh and put on the new and holy of the Spirit of God? *I do, and I ask God to help me.*

Question for the Congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support this (brother), 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, and we ask God to help us.*

Charge for the Candidate and the Congregation

(Brother), in faith and baptism, you are to take hold of Christ forever, committing yourself to the keeping of his holy law, and to never rely upon yourself or anyone or anything save for Christ our Lord for salvation, righteousness, and grace. You are to daily take up your cross to live a life worthy of the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

_____ Parish and all of Sojourn Montrose,

It is your duty to come alongside this (brother) to help love, discipline, teach, and set an example of Christian living for (him). Pray for (him), speak good news to (him), and support (him) to the grace given to you in Christ that we may see this (brother) continue to grow up into the fullness of faith in our Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth.

The Covenant Promise and Baptism

All authority on Heaven and Earth belongs to Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. Therefore, as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

(Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 9:15; Galatians 3:27)

(Name of Candidate), What is your profession of faith?
That Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior!

Therefore, upon this profession of faith,

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

Buried with Christ in a death like His, and raised to walk in new life!

To the Candidate:

You have been sealed with Holy Baptism, which signifies all the promises of God to you and all his people. You are set apart to serve him, love him, and trust him forever. We pray that you continue in Christ by faith for all the days of your life.

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.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the waters of baptism which are a sign to us of your precious and very great promises fulfilled and given to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Allow all of us to take hold of him by faith, to remember the remission of our sins signed in the washing; and to remember that you have given us new life as we trust in you, are buried with you in baptism and are raised with you forever. Amen.

Singing: Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise him all creatures here below
Praise him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Amen!*

Liturgy for the Baptism of a Professing Child

Baptisms for Professing Children will involve a verbal profession of faith from the candidate, a verbal commitment from the parents and the congregation, and a charge from an elder to the candidate, family, and the congregation.

Introduction of Candidate and (His) Family:

I present to you _____, (son) of _____ and _____ to receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Questions for Candidate:

1. Do you acknowledge your need for the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit? ***I do.***
2. As you are baptized into Christ and his kingdom, do you renounce Satan and all forces of evil, both natural and spiritual? ***I do.***
3. Do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation? ***I do.***
4. Do you commit to a life of repentance and faith, in which you will put off the old and sinful things of your flesh and put on the new and holy of the Spirit of God? ***I do, and I ask God to help me.***

Question for the Congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support this (brother), 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, and we ask God to help us.***

Mom, Dad, (or guardian title),

Thank you for your faithfulness to this child! See the fruit it has borne. Now, it is your duty to continue raising this child such that you encourage and foster love for and faith in our Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth. Teach (him) the word of God as you read it to (him) in your home. You are to continue instructing (him) in the principles of our holy religion, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as well as faithful confessions of faith. You are to pray with and for (him). And, you are to set an example of piety and godliness before (him); and endeavor, by all the means of God's appointment, to continue bringing up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Charge for the Candidate and the Congregation

(Brother), in faith and baptism, you are to take hold of Christ forever, committing yourself to the keeping of his holy law, and to never rely upon yourself or anyone or anything save for Christ our Lord for salvation, righteousness, and grace. You are to daily take up your cross to live a life worthy of the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

_____ Parish and all of Sojourn Montrose,

It is your duty to come alongside this (brother) to help love, discipline, teach, and set an example of Christian living for (him). Pray for (him), speak good news to (him), and support (him) to the grace given to you in Christ that we may see this (brother) continue to grow up into the fullness of faith in our Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth.

The Covenant Promise and Baptism

All authority on Heaven and Earth belongs to Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. Therefore, as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

(Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 9:15; Galatians 3:27)

(Name of Candidate), What is your profession of faith?

That Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior!

Therefore, upon this profession of faith,

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

Buried with Christ in a death like his, and raised to walk in new life!

Candidate:

You have been sealed with Holy Baptism, which signifies all the promises of God to you and all his people. You are set apart to serve him, love him, and trust him forever. We pray that you continue in Christ by faith for all the days of your life.

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.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the waters of baptism which are a sign to us of your precious and very great promises fulfilled and given to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Allow all of us to take hold of him by faith, to remember the remission of our sins signed in the washing; and to remember that you have given us new life as we trust in you, are buried with you in baptism and are raised with you forever. Amen.

Singing: Doxology or Jesus Love [You] Depending upon the age of the child.

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise him all creatures here below
Praise him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Amen!*

Baptism Resolution

Proposal for A Resolution to Adopt Covenantal Paedobaptism as an Acceptable Practice of the Holy Sacrament at Sojourn Montrose Church, Thus Becoming a Dual-Practicing Congregation as it Relates to Holy Baptism.

Submitting Elder: Cole Kirby

Submitted On: July 7, 2022

Voted On: July 22, 2022

WHEREAS, Sojourn Montrose's Elders (to be referred to as 'we' henceforth) believe that the faithful administration of the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are necessary marks of a true Church.

WHEREAS, We uphold that God has related to his people through covenants throughout time and dispensation, and

WHEREAS, We consider the children of Christians to be participants in the covenant community of God's Church, whether visible or invisible, and

WHEREAS, We consider that these covenant children are to be raised up into maturity in the faith, and

WHEREAS, We have upheld that there exists at least two acceptable, historic, and orthodox practices of Holy Baptism within the Reformed tradition, and

WHEREAS, The choice to baptize covenant children prior to a confession of faith is a theological stance we have deemed acceptable through our fellowship with Sojourn Houston, and

WHEREAS, We believe that there are considerable Biblical and Historical arguments to be made for baptizing covenant children, even in their infancy, and

WHEREAS, We have acknowledged the infant baptisms of adult members as legitimate baptisms historically, and

WHEREAS, We do not want this issue, concerning which we have striven for unity among a brotherhood consisting of diverging convictions, to prevent qualified men from serving in the capacity of an overseer of our local congregation moving forward, and

WHEREAS, We see the beauty, reasonableness, and discipleship benefits of baptizing infants as well as withholding baptism until a time in which a reasonable profession of faith has been made, and

WHEREAS, The flock of God at Montrose would benefit from the open-handedness of humble leaders in regards to this historically divisive issue, and

WHEREAS, We can make unified statements regarding the role of baptism and a theology of children in the Church, and

WHEREAS, We can meaningfully disciple the families in our congregation toward thoughtfulness and prayerfulness as it relates to the baptism of children and the beauty of God's promises with a varied administration of the sacrament. Now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That Sojourn Montrose shall adopt covenantal paedobaptism as an acceptable administration of the Holy Sacrament; **(PASSED)**

RESOLVED, That Sojourn Montrose's Elders shall adopt a unified statement regarding baptism that all existing elders can agree upon as truthful and edifying for the flock of God under their care; and **(PASSED)**

RESOLVED, That Sojourn Montrose's Elders shall adopt a unified statement regarding a broad theology of children within the covenant community that all existing elders can agree upon as truthful and edifying for the flock of God under their care; and **(PASSED)**

RESOLVED, That any man in candidacy for eldership must affirm both unified statements regarding baptism and a Theology of Children respectively; and **(PASSED)**

RESOLVED, That no elder at Sojourn Montrose will coerce or seek to violate the conscience of any covenant member regarding their desire or lack thereof to baptize their children prior to a confession of faith; and **(PASSED)**

RESOLVED, That Sojourn Montrose's Elders provide both written and public communication to the Convent Members at Sojourn Montrose explaining this change in practice, and the reasoning for such a change no later than June 30, 2023. **(PASSED)**

RESOLVED, That Sojourn Montrose shall not put the practice of covenantal paedobaptism into effect until the covenant members have been notified through both written and public means of communication. **(PASSED)**

On the Practice of Covenantal Paedobaptism at Sojourn Montrose

Introduction

As adherents to historic, reformed, and covenantal theology, Sojourn Montrose believes that the two sacraments, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, were given to the Church by God and instituted by Jesus Christ in order to be signs and seals of the covenant of grace that God has established between him and his people. He has made this covenant both new and more wonderful through the ministry of Jesus Christ, namely his death and resurrection.¹⁶

While some of our elders believe that baptism is rightly applied *only* to those who have made a reasonable profession of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, we are convinced that baptism is *also* rightly applied to the children — even infant children — of believers.

This understanding of baptism is called *covenantal paedobaptism* or *covenantal infant baptism*. We preface with the word “covenantal” to distinguish this theology of baptism from other reasons for baptizing infants. We will address this specific reasoning for baptizing infants below.

Please see the confessional articles in the appendix for two beneficial and robust explanations of this position. We believe both “Article XXVIII” of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) and “Article 34” of the *Belgic Confession* (1561) are accurate and precise representations of our position. However, we will attempt in brief to explain and preempt some of the questions that you might have in language that is potentially more accessible than that of these historic documents.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is a ritual washing, and visible promise to the people of God of the covenant of grace made new in the ministry of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Whereas circumcision was the sacrament of the covenant of grace in the Old Testament, baptism is now the “circumcision of Christ,”¹⁷ as he has established a better sign and seal for the better promises proclaimed and secured through his death and resurrection on our behalf. Because the shedding of blood for sanctification and propitiation has ceased through the crucifixion of Jesus, God has graciously invited us to be baptized with water, becoming entrants and members of his Church.¹⁸

¹⁶ Heb 8:6

¹⁷ Col 2:11-12

¹⁸ Belgic Confession, Article 34; Heb 9:12; Heb 9:26; Heb 10:10

So, baptism is primarily about what God has done and the promises that he has made to his people. It is not primarily a public profession of faith, nor does it save from death or cleanse from sin apart from faith. These realities are realized only by the grace of God, accessed through faith.¹⁹

Because baptism is given to the Church to initiate people into the covenant community, we will argue that the children of believers are members of that community and are, thus, proper candidates for baptism.

Who is the Church?

The Church is God's covenant people, with Christ as its head. We distinguish the Church into two parts: the visible and invisible church.

The *invisible* church is the whole number of God's people who have been or will be saved by God. They are participants with him in his kingdom forever. These are the elect of God: those who profess, believe, and persevere in faith in Christ alone for life and salvation. The invisible church is the true bride of Christ who will be gathered unto him for the eternal wedding feast in the last days and eternity after.²⁰

The *visible* church (or covenant community) consists of all who profess the Christian Faith, participate in the ministry of the Word, and their children.²¹ The children of Christians are part of the visible church. As such, we should treat them as little Christians to disciple, and never as little heathens to be converted. They participate in the Church's life and are raised up in the faith by their parents and their Christians brethren.²² Children are members of the covenant community for their whole lives unless they depart from the faith at a more mature age by their own agency.²³

We rightly call all visible church members "Christians," for they identify with Jesus Christ, his Church, and his ministry. Similarly, all born into Israel were rightly called Jews, even though not all remained faithful to Yahweh and his kingdom.²⁴

All church congregations contain many members of the invisible church, and yet there are invariably going to be men, women, and children who are members of the visible church alone in that they are not truly of the faith, even if they are baptized participants in the church for a time, even many years. Eventually, Christ will judge them for their lack of faith, and many will depart from the faith even before their death.²⁵

¹⁹ Eph 2:8

²⁰ WCF XXV.1; Rev 21:2-9; Eph 5:23-32

²¹ WCF XXV.2

²² Prv 22:6; Is 54:13; Dt 6:6-7; Eph 6:1-3; Eph 6:4

²³ We see examples of this throughout the Old Testament, most evident in those circumcised and raised in the faith and covenant community yet depart from faithfulness in their adulthood (ex: Absalom).

²⁴ Rom 9:6-8

²⁵ Heb 6:4-6

Baptism's Relationship to Circumcision

In the former days, circumcision served as the sacrament which marked and set apart God's covenant people as those who belong to him, are guaranteed his protection, and can trust him to fulfill his promises for their good. It was given to all who were part of Israel, whether by birth or choice. Infant males received the sign of circumcision on the eighth day of their lives, and male foreigners who converted unto the kingdom of Yahweh were given the sign upon their entry into the fellowship and citizenship of Israel.²⁶ It was the sacrament of inclusion and initiation in the Old Testament.

While multiple signs and events in the Old Testament correspond to baptism,²⁷ circumcision is the obvious correlating sacrament that baptism has replaced.²⁸ In baptism, the Christian is initiated into the Church, made a citizen of the Kingdom of God, and given access to God's promises.

God's Design and Love for Children and Their Parents

Throughout the history of God's people, God has given parents the responsibility to raise their children to love him, obey him, and serve him.²⁹ These children, marked by the sign and seal of God's covenant promises, were not like the children of heathens and nonbelievers but were set apart on the basis of their belonging to God through their parents' faith. Job was considered blameless before God, and part of this account was that he repented and offered sacrifices on behalf of his children.³⁰ Hannah brought forth her son, Samuel, to be consecrated to the service of the LORD even as he was a toddler.³¹

In the ministry of Christ, we learn even more about God's heart for children. Jesus famously said, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for *to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.*"³² Moreover, five of Jesus's healing miracles have children as the beneficiaries. Christ heals them based on the faith and pleas of their mothers and fathers, while there is no mention at all of the children having faith.³³

²⁶ Gn. 17:12-14; Ex. 12:48. Males were circumcised in their flesh, but the spirit of the sacrament applied to men and women alike. Yet, God found it sufficient to apply the sign to males, understanding that they and their households would be set apart unto the Lord.

²⁷ 1 Pt. 3:20. Peter makes a connection between Noah passing through the flood waters and baptism. 1 Cor 10 argues that baptism and communion are truer versions of the shadowy figures of the Exodus events of passing through the Red Sea, passing through the cloud, feasting upon the Passover lamb, the wilderness food of manna, and water from the rock.

²⁸ Col. 2:11. Paul calls baptism the "circumcision of Christ."

²⁹ Pv. 22:6; Is. 54:13; Dt. 6:6-7; Eph. 6:1-3; Eph. 6:4

³⁰ Job 1:4-5;

³¹ 1 Sm. 1:21-28

³² Mt. 19:14. *Emphasis added.*

³³ Jn. 4:43-54; Lk. 7:11-17; Mt. 9:18-26; Mk. 7:24-30; Lk. 9:37-43. Some of these events are recorded in multiple Gospels, yet for brevity I have only cited one passage for each healing.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, the language of the Apostles implies that we should disciple children of Christians as though they are little Christians.³⁴ And, in our Lord's call to make disciples, baptism is the initiation into the teachings of Christ.³⁵ God graciously covers covenant children based upon his gracious will and the repentance and faith of their parents. Parents act in faith as they bring their children forward to receive the sign and seal of baptism.

So, Why Should We Baptize Infants?

We will summarize our position in the four following reasons, even as we are convinced that this is in no way an exhaustive list of reasons to baptize infants.

It is biblical.

One of the strongest arguments in favor of the paedobaptist view rests on the new Testament's continuation of strong covenantal language – “to you and your seed”³⁶ – regarding the recipients of God's blessed promises. Additionally, there is silence in the New Testament regarding whether or not to baptize infants. Children were given the covenant sign (circumcision) in the Old Testament, and nowhere do any of the New Testament authors indicate that this should not be the case for baptism. It would seem that a change as stark as excluding infants from receiving covenantal sacraments would be made clear by Jesus or the Apostles, and yet nowhere is this change announced in the Bible.³⁷

Furthermore, both Paul and Peter talk about the salvation of the gospel being applied to entire households.³⁸ We see this theology practiced in that there are at least four occasions in which entire households were baptized.³⁹ In fact, outside of the account of the Ethiopian eunuch (who obviously had no wife or children),⁴⁰ every specific account of New Testament conversion resulted in the entire household being baptized. The Philippian jailer's entire household was baptized within an hour following his conversion.⁴¹ While we cannot prove that there were infants present, we cannot assume that there were not. Moreover, we can see that the jailer's household became a Christian home because he, as the covenant head of his family, had believed. We have no evidence of his family members making a profession of faith. The conversion of Crispus, however, was different. The text indicates that in this case, his whole household did come to genuine faith. Yet, even in Crispus's house, the text does not tell us whether they were baptized before or after their repentance and profession of faith.⁴²

Finally, Paul gives us reason to believe that children are covered by the faith of their parents (even one parent) until an age at which they can take hold of the responsibility of faith and

³⁴ Eph. 6:1-4; 1 Cor. 7:14

³⁵ Mt. 28:19-20

³⁶ Acts 2:38-39. This the most explicit example, though the covenantal theme of the New Testament is woven throughout.

³⁷ Sinclair B. Ferguson, baptism: *Three Views*, ed. David F. Wright (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2009), 105.

³⁸ Acts 11:13; Acts 16:31. This is due to the nature of covenant administration being one that is specifically familial in orientation (*to you and your seed*).

³⁹ 1 Cor 1:16; Acts 16:33; Acts 16:15; Acts 18:8

⁴⁰ Acts 8:34-38

⁴¹ Acts 16:33

⁴² Acts 18:8

faithfulness for themselves.⁴³ They are thus to be baptized into the covenant and allowed to grow up into the fullness of its meaning.

They are covenant children.

God established a covenant with Abraham and made circumcision its sign. This covenant was given not only to Abraham, who was faithful but also to his children and their descendants:

*And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*⁴⁴

Abraham entered this covenant with God through faith, counted righteous by God through his faith. And, following his initial trust in God, he was circumcised — marked by God with a continual sign and seal of the promises of God.⁴⁵ Yet, as the federal head of his family and the promised “great nation” to come through his offspring, God commanded Abraham to circumcise his male children on the eighth day of their lives.⁴⁶ So, while Abraham received the sacrament following his profession of faith, Isaac, his son, received it on the eighth day of his life, long before he could intellectually comprehend or verbally proclaim the faith. Yet, the promises were for him because he was the son of Abraham.

The children of Israel were graciously signed and sealed with the promises of God in the hopeful expectation of their faith and participation in the Kingdom of God through faith. Isaac was marked as one set apart by God to receive the blessings of God even before we have evidence that he trusted in God through faith.

At Pentecost, The Apostle Peter spoke about the New Covenant established by Christ, saying, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you *and for your children* and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”⁴⁷ The author of Hebrews describes the new covenant in Christ as “much better” because it is “enacted on better promises.”⁴⁸ So, the new covenant has better promises than the old, which are for those who repent and their children. If the old and worse covenant included children in the sacrament of initiation and inclusion, then it stands to reason that the new and better covenant would be just as – even more – inclusive and grace-filled than the old. So, we should baptize covenant children into the new covenant community, with baptism being a more grace-filled sacrament than circumcision because it signs and seals the covenant people with even better promises than those given to Abraham. Just as baptism signs and seals the grace of God, so is the rite itself a gift of God, given without cost or merit. Infants are not only acceptable candidates for baptism; their baptism is lovely and should affect the souls of Christians. For what makes our neediness more visible than the sight of a helpless child?⁴⁹

⁴³ 1 Cor 7:14

⁴⁴ Gen 17:7, ESV

⁴⁵ Rom 4:3

⁴⁶ Gen 17:12, 23-27

⁴⁷ Act 2:38-39, ESV; *emphasis added*

⁴⁸ Heb 8:6

⁴⁹ Mt 18:1-4

They are disciples.

As referenced before, the Children of Christians are disciples we raise in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord.”⁵⁰ It is right and good to baptize our infants in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and then devote ourselves to teaching them all Christ has commanded.⁵¹ In this, we participate in the work of the Great Commission.⁵²

They are kingdom heirs, welcomed explicitly by the King.

We already mentioned that Jesus welcomed children to come to him, told adult listeners that the kingdom of Heaven belonged to people such as them, and touched and blessed them.⁵³ If our Lord welcomes and places his hand of blessing upon covenant children, then let us gladly offer the beneficial waters of baptism to them as well.

How Should We Baptize Infants? A Note on Mode.

While we do not have an opinion as strong regarding the mode of baptism as we do the candidates of baptism, we believe that the baptism of infants – and adults for that matter – is sufficiently, faithfully, and biblically accomplished through sprinkling or affusion. There is a redemptive-historical principle of sprinklings or washings for the covenant people of God, and baptism is certainly a ritual washing.⁵⁴ There is no conclusive evidence of one practice or the other in the New Testament, referring to sprinkling versus immersion, and the most important aspect of mode is that water is the physical element of the sacrament. There are many able defenses of both sides of this argument.⁵⁵ But, we do not believe that infants should be sprinkled for practical reasons above theological and symbolic ones.

Conclusion

While we believe baptism is for children of believers, we do not believe baptism is the means of salvation or that all baptized infants — or adults, for that matter — are genuinely saved as members of God's elect.

In other words, we don't believe that someone becomes spiritually alive to the beauty of God, the truth about Christ, and receives the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence simply because of their baptism. Baptism signifies that our sins are washed away in Christ, our new and eternal life has begun, and the Holy Spirit has come upon us. And through faith, all of these realities are given to the baptized person. The Westminster Confession of Faith says,

⁵⁰ Eph. 6:4

⁵¹ Mt. 28:19-20

⁵² To be clear, we are not arguing that Christians having children is the only way in which we are called to participate in the expansion of Jesus's Kingdom. We are still called to our neighbors and the nations. Yet fruitful multiplication can take many forms in the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁵³ Mt. 19:14

⁵⁴ Ex 24:8; Lev 8:11, 30; Heb 10:22; Heb 12:24

⁵⁵ See Joseph Pipa's chapter in *The Case for Covenantal Infant baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), 112-126.

WCF XXVIII.6

The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered;⁵⁶ yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.⁵⁷

God saves by grace alone through faith alone. Yet, baptism is not ineffective for infants of Christians to proclaim and truly offer the blessed promises of God,⁵⁸ even if the faith related to those promises comes later.⁵⁹ Further, we must not assume that infants, though intellectually undeveloped and lacking the agency of adults, cannot believe upon Christ for salvation. John the Baptist seemed to be regenerated in the womb,⁶⁰ and King David claimed to have had allegiance to God even before he was born.⁶¹ So, lest we place any burdens of works or proofs upon our children, we should baptize them even before they are able to proclaim repentance and faith. If they continue in the faith as they mature, the fullness of their baptism will be realized. And, just as a baptized convert may depart from Christ, and prove to have not had faith, so too, may some Christian children in their adulthood. Paul understood this well.⁶²

Yet, we cannot restrict baptism to those whom we know for certain will remain faithful till the end.⁶³ In that case, our baptismal would be ever empty. Instead, the promises proclaimed in baptism are gifts of the Triune God to be for the Christian a constant testament and reminder as to their being the beloved of God and an encouragement to hold fast even amid trials and temptations.

Because salvation is not tied to the works of men in any way, we can apply the sign and seal of God's promises to all who enter into the covenant community (whether by birth or by conversion) in hopes that God will perfect their baptism throughout their life as he gives them faith, teaches them to obey, and matures them in the wisdom which comes from above.

So, as we baptize our infants, we are not proclaiming that they believe in Christ or have practiced repentance. Instead, we appeal to God, on the basis of his promises, to declare that these children are his.⁶⁴ And, we declare that they are, in accordance with his covenant, set apart to obey Him, glorify Him, and grow into the faith they participate in and benefit from even in their infancy.

⁵⁶ Jn. 3:5, 8

⁵⁷ Gal. 3:27, Tit. 3:5, Eph. 5:25–26, Act. 2:38, 41

⁵⁸ Gal. 3:27

⁵⁹ Gal. 3:26

⁶⁰ Lk. 1:41

⁶¹ Ps. 22:10

⁶² Rom. 9:6–8

⁶³ This is not opposed to a reformed position on the perseverance and preservation of the saints. We believe that all whom God truly makes alive through faith in and union with Christ will be saved in the last days. One cannot apostatize from the *invisible Church*, but one can from the *visible Church*.

⁶⁴ 1 Pet 3:21

Appendix

Belgic Confession, Article 34: Of Holy Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, hath made an end, by the shedding of his blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin: and that he, having abolished circumcision, which was done with blood, hath instituted the sacrament of baptism, instead thereof; by which we are received into the Church of God, and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to him, whose ensign and banner we bear: and which serves as a testimony to us, that he will forever be our gracious God and Father.

Therefore he has commanded all those, who are his, to be baptized with pure water, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost": thereby signifying to us, that as water washeth away the filth of the body, when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized, when sprinkled upon him; so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath, unto children of God. Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God; who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass, to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and to enter into the spiritual land of Canaan.

Therefore the ministers, on their part, administer the sacrament, and that which is visible, but our Lord giveth that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts, and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of his fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds.

Therefore we believe, that every man, who is earnestly studious of obtaining life eternal, ought to be but once baptized with this only baptism, without ever repeating the same: since we cannot be born twice. Neither doth this baptism only avail us, at the time when the water is poured upon us, and received by us, but also through the whole course of our life.

Therefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants of believers, whom we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, upon the same promises which are made unto our children. And indeed Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful, than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that, which Christ hath done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law, that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death, shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, that baptism is for our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Revised in the National Synod, held at Dordrecht, in the years 1618 and 1619

Westminster Confession of Faith, Article XXVIII: Of Baptism

1. *Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ,⁶⁶ not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church;⁶⁷ but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace,⁶⁸ of his ingrafting into Christ,⁶⁹ of regeneration,⁷⁰ of remission of sins,⁷¹ and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.⁷² Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world.⁷³*
2. *The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the Gospel, lawfully called thereunto.⁷⁴*
3. *Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person.⁷⁵*
4. *Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ,⁷⁶ but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.⁷⁷*
5. *Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance,⁷⁸ yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it:⁷⁹ or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.⁸⁰*
6. *The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered;⁸¹ yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time.⁸²*
7. *The sacrament of baptism is but once to be administered unto any person.⁸³*

⁶⁶ Mt. 28:19;

⁶⁷ 1 Cor. 12:13

⁶⁸ Rom. 4:11; Col. 2:11-12

⁶⁹ Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:5

⁷⁰ Tit. 3:5

⁷¹ Mk. 1:4

⁷² Rom. 6:3-4

⁷³ Mt. 28:19-20

⁷⁴ Mt. 3:11; Jn. 1:33; Mt. 28:19-20

⁷⁵ Heb. 9:10, 19-22; Act. 2:41; Act. 16:33; Mk. 7:4

⁷⁶ Mk. 16:15-16; Act. 8:37-38

⁷⁷ Gen. 17:7-8; Gal. 3:9, 14; Col. 2:11-12; Act. 2:38-39; Rom. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:14; Mt. 28:19; Mk. 10:12-16; Lk. 18:15

⁷⁸ Lk. 7:30; Ex. 4:24-26

⁷⁹ Rom. 4:11; Act. 10:2, 4, 22, 31, 45, 47;

⁸⁰ Act. 8:13, 23

⁸¹ Jn. 3:5, 8

⁸² Gal. 3:27; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 5:25-26; Act. 2:38-41

⁸³ Tit. 3:5

This was quoted directly from the Westminster Confession of Faith, Article XXVIII (1646), copyright 2005, 2007 by The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *All citations are the proofs provided by the WCF and not the citations of the author(s) of this paper.*

On the Baptism of Believers at Sojourn Montrose

Believer's Baptism Defined

Baptism is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace in the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be for the one baptized a sign of their fellowship with Jesus, in His death and resurrection, of their engrafting into Christ, of their regeneration, of their remission of sins, and of their surrender to God, through Faith in Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life. Thus, baptism is to be continued in His church until His Return.⁸⁴

Baptism is for those who repent to God and have faith in and obedience to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.⁸⁵ In baptism, the baptized party is immersed in water to signify the cleansing of their sin, the death of their old self, the rising of the party in newness of life, and their entrance into the church of Jesus Christ.

This type of baptism is called credo-baptism, or in this paper, believer's baptism.

What is a sacrament?

The Westminster confession of faith correctly defines sacraments, saying: "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world; and solemnly engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word."⁸⁶

Put another way, a sacrament is a sign and seal of a covenant. Baptism is a sign in that it outwardly and visibly indicates that the party receiving the sacrament participates in the covenant. Baptism is a seal in that it both documents authenticity and joins the party in the covenant such that they cannot come apart. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments that sign and seal the Covenant of Grace, both of which are given by Jesus to his people.

Baptism is related to entry into the covenant of Grace. The Lord's Supper is related to renewal within the covenant of grace. Put simply, one is baptized when one enters the visible church. And one takes communion as one remains in the visible church.

⁸⁴ Adapted from WCF 27 and LBCF 24

⁸⁵ LBCF 24.2

⁸⁶ WCF 27.1

Who is the Church?

The visible church refers to everyone who is meaningfully and visibly engaged and baptized into the body of believers. At Sojourn Montrose, this typically means our covenant members.

However, there are professing believers who partake in our communion and our weekly worship who are not yet members but are still part of the visible church in that they profess repentance and faith in Jesus.

The second category of church belonging is the invisible church. This concept is more nebulous, as it refers to those who are visibly and meaningfully part of the community of faith and are Elect by God. This means, the invisible church is made up of the true Christians who have been saved. There are members of the church who end up leaving the faith by rejecting Christ and his necessary beliefs⁸⁷ and therefore leave the visible church. Those members who apostate from the visible church are found to have not been part of the invisible church, they do not persevere until the end even if for a season they were beneficially involved in the fellowship of the visible church.

We believe that baptism marks specific and visible entry into the visible church. Therefore, those who practice believer's baptism believe that only those who profess repentance and faith in Christ are most surely part of the visible church, and therefore should be baptized.

Yet, are unbaptized children of Christian members part of the church? The short answer is yes, unbaptized children are meaningfully part of the church and are dedicated to that end⁸⁸. These children benefit from the commitment to faith made by parents and the commitments of the community. They benefit from teaching, singing, praying, fellowship, and learning about who Jesus is. They are part of our community and our church and raised as if they will grasp the faith that surrounds them. However, for these children, baptism is reserved for when they make the faith of their parents and community their own. This means, a child who repents and believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord is marked as fully and individually entered into the visible church, and thus is ready for baptism. While the child may be meaningfully part of the church before they can walk, talk, or reason, the profession of repentance and faith is the most clear and significant sign that God has called a person to Himself and granted him or her salvation, and therefore the sacrament marks their entry into the faith of their fathers and mothers.

⁸⁷ The Nicene Creed

⁸⁸ 1 Sam

Covenant Continuity

In the Old Testament, sacraments (those rites that sign and seal covenants) are consistently for the people of God and their children. The covenant between God and Abraham was signed and sealed by the sacrament of circumcision, circumcision of the people of God and their children. The covenant between God and Noah was signed by the Rainbow, which was for the people of God and their children. The covenant between God and Moses was signed by the passover lamb, which was for the people of God and their children.

For those who practice Believer's baptism, we believe that Christ has redefined what it means to be "born" into the people of God. In the Old Testament, the visible people of God were primarily defined by their ethnic lineage. For them, faith in the future Messiah was still ultimately required for salvation. The visible church of the old testament is ethnic Israel. Foreigners were allowed to assimilate into the people of God, but circumcision was required as part of this assimilation in keeping with the covenant's sacrament.

Under the new covenant, how is one "born" into the people of God? Jesus tells Nicodemus in the Gospel of John, one must be "born again."⁸⁹ Paul, in his letter to the Romans, says that circumcision is replaced by a circumcision of the heart, by the Holy Spirit, not one of the flesh.⁹⁰ In his letter to the Galatians, he says that all who are baptized have "clothed themselves in Christ." Thus, there is no longer a distinction between ethnicities as it relates to being part of the people of God.⁹¹ The church has replaced ethnic Israel as the people of God under the Covenant of Grace. Jesus, in His great commission given in the Gospel of Matthew, tells his followers to Make Disciples and then baptize them and teach them.⁹² The Apostles often use the language of "maturation" to describe the process of sanctification, arguing that those born into faith should grow up into their faith.⁹³

In Matthew 18, Jesus puts it plainly:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of

⁸⁹ Jn 3:1-21

⁹⁰ Rom 2:29

⁹¹ Gal 3:27-28

⁹² Mt 28

⁹³ Eph 4:13-15

*these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*⁹⁴”

No longer is physical birth the primary requirement for entry into the visible church, the people of God. Instead, to be part of the visible church is to be born into her through repentance and faith in Christ. One must become like a child, unable to bring anything of their own accord to Christ, and turn from their old self and be reborn in faith as a redeemed member of the people of God, the church. The sacrament of baptism perfectly signs and seals the entrance into the church. It is through repentance, death with Christ, and rising in new life that any are born again as children of God.

What Happens at Baptism

The Bible commands us to wash new Christians in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵ When someone repents and believes unto Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, they are justified by their faith and are ready to be baptized.

Baptism is a ritual washing that signals our adoption into the family of God, our union to Jesus and His Body,⁹⁶ our cleansing from sin,⁹⁷ and our consecration into the priesthood and temple.⁹⁸ In short, baptism welcomes us into the church. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus is present in baptism, pouring out His grace and building up the faith of His people. Baptism is, therefore, a means of salvation,⁹⁹ not because the water is magic, but because we are baptized into the Name of God and into the church of God. Baptized people should remember and contemplate their baptisms regularly, because God wants to remind us continually that we are His cherished children, that we have been united to the death and resurrection of Jesus, that we live by His Spirit, that we belong to the church, that we are called to build His Kingdom, and that glory awaits us when Jesus returns to make all things new!

At baptism, we fully immerse, or dip into the water, the baptized party to signify both the washing of sin and the burial of their old self. As they emerge from the water, the party signifies their salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus. Baptism does not save, rather baptism is the sign and seal of salvation by grace through faith. It is a step in obedience to Jesus, obeying his good commands, and surrendering to the process of sanctification initiated by the Holy Spirit. And yet, baptism is so linked to salvation that scripture often uses the terms interchangeably.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Mt 18:1-6, emphasis added

⁹⁵ Mt 28:19

⁹⁶ Rom 6:3-5, Gal 3:27, 1 Cor 12:13, Col 2:12

⁹⁷ Mk 1:4, Tit 3:5

⁹⁸ Heb 10:22

⁹⁹ Westminster Shorter Catechism

¹⁰⁰ Gal 3:27

Because baptism is inherently communal — as the Trinitarian God initiates his child into his diverse family — we invite all Christians present to participate in the baptism of our dear brothers and sisters. When the party steps into the water, the Elder or Deacon overseeing the sacrament will ask the baptized party: “What is your confession of Faith?” to which they will respond, “Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.” Then, as the baptism is conducted and the party is fully submerged under the water and raised out of it, we join the overseer in reciting, “Therefore, we baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹⁰¹ You are buried with Christ in his death, and raised with him to walk in newness of life.¹⁰²”

Mode of Baptism for Believers

Because of what baptism signifies, immersion is the correct mode of baptism for believers. Baptism utilizes water because water signifies the washing or remission of sins. Further, baptism utilizes immersion in water, which signifies our being baptized into the death of Christ. Romans 6:4 gives us clarity, stating “we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, we too might walk in newness of life.¹⁰³ To be fully surrounded by death¹⁰⁴ and raised in new life is the climax of baptism. While John Calvin disagreed that the mode of baptism was essential for practicing the sacrament, he did argue that “the word “baptize” means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient church.¹⁰⁵”

Age of Baptism for Believers

Many questions have been raised regarding the age at which a child can make a suitable and authentic profession of faith, including repentance of sin and declared faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Yet, at Sojourn Montrose, we believe that parents, deacons, elders, and community are perfectly capable of teaching and leading children to believe unto the Lord, and are further capable of discerning authentic professions of faith that merit baptism. Therefore, we place no age restriction on baptism other than what is seen as the preceding requirement: That they believe and are then baptized. Sojourn Montrose encourages children and adults alike to seek baptism as soon as they make an authentic profession of faith, as discerned by their family, regardless of whether that family lives under one roof, gathers weekly in worship and community, or both.

¹⁰¹ Mt 28:18-20

¹⁰² Rom 6:5

¹⁰³ Rom 6:4

¹⁰⁴ Gen 6:5-7

¹⁰⁵ Institutes for the Christian Religion, *Book IV, Ch. XV.19*

In light of this, we reserve the Lord's Supper for baptized and believing Christians.¹⁰⁶

Sojourn Montrose also practices a ceremony called Child Dedication. The Child Dedication is not a sacrament, but it is a traditional element of our church where parents recognize their God-given responsibility to raise children, training them in faith,¹⁰⁷ and acknowledging their need for communal help.¹⁰⁸ Thus, we regularly ask parents to commit to prayerfully raising their children in the faith. Simultaneously, we ask the church community to commit to praying for and partnering with parents and children to raise those children in the faith. We are dedicating our children unto God.¹⁰⁹ Children are dedicated in the glorious hope that one day their parents and church community will celebrate the fruit of their prayer and petition at the day of the child's baptism.

¹⁰⁶ *Future position paper on Communion*

¹⁰⁷ Prov 22:6, Eph 6:4

¹⁰⁸ Gal 6:3

¹⁰⁹ 1 Sam 1:27-28