

15. An Order for the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water

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Status of Paper	Final
Resolutions	15/1. The Conference received the Report. 15/2. The Conference authorised the order for <i>Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water</i> for use in the Methodist Church.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Under SO330(9) the Faith and Order Committee recommends that the <i>Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water</i> is authorised by Conference for use in the Methodist Church.
Main Points	Introduction and background An order for the <i>Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water</i> .
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	2011 <i>Faith and Order Committee Report to Conference Part III (The Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows including the Use of Water)</i> 2012 <i>Faith and Order Committee Report to Conference (Section C)</i>
Consultations	The text was made available for trial and experimentation subsequent to the 2012 Conference.

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Introduction and Background

1. In its report to the 2011 Conference, the Faith and Order Committee explained that guidance had been sought regarding the use of a liturgical form of renewal of baptismal vows, including the use of water, with people who have experienced a renewal of their spiritual life; and it explored the theological, pastoral and practical implications of adopting such a liturgy. It clarified that the suggested rite was not for the renewal of baptism. Baptism is “a sacrament that neither needs nor can have any renewal.” (*Faith and Order Committee Report 2011, paragraph 1*) As such it is “unrepeatable and ‘indelible’”. In other words, baptism as a child cannot be ‘undone’ or repeated as an adult – however powerful the experience of renewal.” (*Faith and Order Committee Report 2011, paragraph 5*) The Conference received the report and directed the Faith and Order Committee to create a liturgy for the *Renewal of Baptismal Vows including the Use of Water*.
2. In its continued exploration of the theological and practical questions raised by this liturgy, the Committee decided that the title should be altered to *Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water*. This more accurately reflected the fact that it was not the vows, or ‘promises’, that were being renewed, but rather the faith which underlies those promises.
3. A proposed liturgy was received by the 2012 Conference and commended to Local Churches and Circuits for experimental use. It was also made available on the Methodist Church website. In March 2014 a request for feedback was sent to all Circuit Superintendents, welcoming comments on the text and its usage.
4. The comments received indicated that the general concept of the service was largely appreciated. Although not widely used, examples were given of how it had been employed in different contexts. Two particular issues were also identified. These related to the manner of the use of water, and questions about the manner of signing. As a result, the text has been revised in order to give greater clarity on these points.
5. Under SO330(9), the Faith and Order Committee therefore submits the revised order for the *Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water* to the Conference for approval for use in the Methodist Church.

The Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water

INTRODUCTION

Baptism is an unrepeatable sacrament of entry into the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which the Methodist Church is part. In Confirmation, those who have been baptized declare their faith in Christ and are strengthened by the Holy Spirit for continuing discipleship.

The Methodist Church recognises that some who have been baptized have grown away from the Christian faith but have discovered afresh the claim of Christ on their lives and have felt the call to repentance. They long to rededicate themselves to Christ by renewing the expression of faith associated with Baptism and Confirmation.

The Methodist Church also recognises the deep pastoral needs of those who wish the reaffirmation of baptismal faith to include the sign and gift of water associated with the sacrament of Baptism.

Such of the above who were baptized as young children but have not been confirmed should be confirmed, to affirm their faith, make their promises to God and receive the strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit. They may wish at their Confirmation to express particular thanks for their Baptism by signing themselves with water, as guided by section 10 of the following service.

The service which follows is in its entirety for those who have previously been baptized and confirmed and who now seek to reaffirm their faith with the use of water.

In such services as the *Easter Vigil* (Methodist Worship Book (MWB) p265) it has long been the practice of the Church universal to associate The Reaffirmation of Baptism with the water of Baptism and each year many Easter congregations receive the Asperges or sprinkling with the baptismal water.

NOTES

Appropriate parts of this service may be used on the same occasion as ***A Celebration of Christian Renewal*** (MWB p404) or during a service in which others have been baptised or confirmed. It is encouraged that this service should be within the context of celebration of Holy Communion. The use of the order for ***Holy Communion for The Day of Pentecost and Times of Renewal in the Life of the Church*** (MWB p174) is especially suitable.

When, at item 10, the candidate is invited to sign themselves or be signed with water, it may be done so in a variety of manners as decided appropriate in the local contexts. It may for some, for example, be done by either signing themselves or being signed by a member of the Church using water from the font whilst others may feel a greater volume of water to be an appropriate symbol. It remains a principle that this is not a service of Baptism and care must be taken in the use of words to ensure that this principle is not compromised.

THE PREFACE

1. Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be his kingdom, now and forever.
There is one Body and one Spirit;
there is one hope in God's call to us;
one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

one God and Father of all.

THE DECLARATION

2. In Baptism God calls us into his covenant of grace in Christ.
God is ever loving, and always faithful, even when we are faithless.
In our Baptism God claimed us for his own.
In our confirmation God strengthened us for discipleship
and continues to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit.
In our lives we continue to hear God's call to us
to love and serve him at all times and in all places.
We here confess what God has done for us,
and reaffirm our response to his call.

THE PRESENTATION OF THOSE REAFFIRMING THEIR BAPTISMAL FAITH

Items marked * must be said in all circumstances of use of this liturgy.

3. The minister says:

The Lord has done great things for us
and holy is his name.

N and N are here to give thanks for what the Lord has done for *them*
and to declare *their* commitment to the one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
in whose name *they* were baptized.

4. The congregation stands

Those people who are reaffirming their Baptismal Faith are presented to the congregation
and the minister asks them:

*Have you been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit?

I have.

*Do you earnestly desire, with all your heart and mind,
to reaffirm your place in this covenant faith
and declare again your commitment to Christ?

I do.

THE DECISION AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

5. The congregation remains standing.

The minister says to those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith:

In Baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.
To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him.

Therefore, I ask:
Do you turn away from evil and all that denies God?

By the grace of God, I do.

Do you turn to God,
trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour,
and in the Holy Spirit as helper and guide?

By the grace of God, I do.

6. The minister says to everyone present:

Do you believe and trust in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son?

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

Do you believe and trust 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. Amen.**

7. Those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith may give their testimony to God's renewing grace and declare their commitment to Christ.

THE DECLARATION AND REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL FAITH

8. Those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith move to the front of the church.

The minister says:

May the God who brought you to new birth
through water and the Spirit,
keep you faithful to Christ.

9. The People respond:

Remember that you are baptized and be thankful.

10. Those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith sign themselves, or are signed by a member of the Church, with water. The manner in which they do so, and the volume of water used, may be determined according to local usage.

11. The minister says:

Let us pray:

Gracious God,
grant that *these* your *servants*
may grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ.
Equip *them* with the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
fill *them* with all faith in believing
that *they* may increase in love for your people
and in the service of your kingdom of justice and peace.

Amen.

THE PROMISES

12. The minister says:

N and N (N), I ask you now to respond to God's love and grace
by making these promises.

Will you commit yourself to the Christian life of worship and service, and be open to the
renewing power of God?

With God's help I will.

Will you seek the strength of God's Spirit as you accept the cost of following Jesus Christ in
your daily life?

With God's help I will.

Will you witness, by word and deed, to the good news of God in Christ, and so give glory to
God?

With God's help I will.

We rejoice with you in your experience of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of
God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; and we pray for God's continued blessing on you.

13. The minister says to the congregation:

Members of the Body of Christ, we rejoice that *these*, our *sisters and brothers*, have
reaffirmed *their* Baptismal Faith and declared *their* commitment to Jesus Christ.

Will you so maintain the Church's life of worship and service that *they* may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

With God's help we will.

14. **The minister says:**

Let us pray.

**Generous God,
touch us again
with the fire of your Spirit
and renew in us all
the grace of our Baptism;
that we may profess the one true faith
and live in love and unity
with all who are baptized into Christ. Amen.**

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

15. **Hymn**

16. **The service continues from the prayers of Intercession in any appropriate order for Holy Communion. That for *The Day of Pentecost and Times of Renewal in the life of the Church* (MWB p174) is especially suitable.**
