

**REFORMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERY**  
**Moderator: Rev C Tuck    Clerk: Pastor N van der Wel**  
**C/O 206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701**

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**BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND PROTOCOLS CONCERNING THE SACRAMENTS.**

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**EXTRACT MINUTE**

Reformation Presbyterian Church, Australian Presbytery, met within 175 Vallis Street, Frenchville, Queensland 4701, on the Second of August 2019 and was constituted, was adjourned and then resumed on the Third of August 2019. Among other things,

**5. Business Arising.**

**VIII. Biblical Principles and Protocols concerning the Sacraments.**

It was moved, seconded and agreed THAT:

The Presbytery adopt “Biblical Principles and Protocols concerning the Sacraments 2019.08.02” and publish it to the several Sessions and other interested parties.

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery by the Clerk on the Seventh of September 2019.

Pastor Neil van der Wel  
 Clerk of Presbytery  
 206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701

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**EXTRACT MINUTE**

Reformation Presbyterian Church, Australian Presbytery, met via teleconference, on the Twenty-Eighth of November 2019 and was constituted, was adjourned and then resumed on the Fifth of December 2019. Among other things,

**5. Business Arising.**

**IX. Recommendations from “Biblical Principles and Protocols concerning the Sacraments.”**

**B. Recommendation C from Section I “On Admission to the Sacraments”.**

It was moved, seconded and agreed THAT:

The Presbytery approve and adopt the reformulation of the “Questions Put to Individuals Applying to Sit at the Lord’s Table for the First Time, or requesting Baptism on Profession of Faith” and that this document be distributed to the various Sessions for their use.

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery by the Clerk on the Third of April 2020.

Pastor Neil van der Wel  
Clerk of Presbytery  
206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701

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### **EXTRACT MINUTE**

Reformation Presbyterian Church, Australian Presbytery, met via teleconference, on the Sixth of February 2020 and was constituted, was adjourned and then resumed on the Twelfth of March, was further adjourned and then resumed on the Twenty-Sixth of March 2020. Among other things,

#### **5. Business Arising.**

#### **XII. Recommendations from “Biblical Principles and Protocols concerning the Sacraments.”**

##### **A. Guidelines concerning admitting visitors and regular adherents to the Lord’s Table.**

It was moved, seconded, and agreed THAT:

The Presbytery approve and adopt these Guidelines for admitting of visitors to the Lord’s Table, as well as those who are regular adherents but have not yet entered into formal membership of a congregation, and that they be distributed to the various Sessions.

It was moved, seconded, and agreed THAT:

The document “Biblical Principles and Protocols concerning the Sacraments” be updated to include the guidelines for admitting of visitors to the Lord’s Table, as well as those who are regular adherents but have not yet entered into formal membership of a congregation, and the previously approved reformulation of the “Questions Put to Individuals Applying to Sit at the Lord’s Table for the First Time, or requesting Baptism on Profession of Faith”.

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery by the Clerk on the Third of April 2020.

Pastor Neil van der Wel  
Clerk of Presbytery  
206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701

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### **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND PROTOCOLS CONCERNING THE SACRAMENTS.**

#### **Introduction**

We believe that the matters of fundamental importance concerning the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, including the nature of the elements, their meaning, mode and administration, are largely set down in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms and the Directory of Public Worship. The subjects addressed in this

document are not intended to replace the aforesaid teaching, but to supplement it, with particular regard to issues that have arisen in various branches of the Church in modern times.

## 1. On Admission to the Sacraments.

- I. Some relevant statements from the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and the Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC):
  - A. WCF 25:2, *“The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children...”* [1 Corinthians 1:2; 12:12-13; Psalm 2:8; Revelation 7:9; Romans 15:9-12; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Acts 2:39; Ezekiel 16:20-21; Romans 11:16; Genesis 3:15; 17:7].
  - B. WCF 27:1, *“Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace... to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world...”* [Romans 4:11; Genesis 17:7,10; Romans 15:8; Exodus 12:48; Genesis 34:14].
  - C. WCF 28:4, *“Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents, are to be baptized.”* [Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:37-38; Genesis 17:7-10; Galatians 3:9,14; Colossians 2:11-12; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:14]. (See also WLC 166).
  - D. WCF 29:8, *“Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with [the Lord], so are they unworthy of the Lord’s Table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.”* [1 Corinthians 11:27-29; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16; 1 Corinthians 5:6,7,13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14,15; Matthew 7:6].
  - E. WCF 30:3, *“Church censures are necessary...for the preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.”* [1 Corinthians 5; 1 Timothy 5:20; Matthew 7:6; 1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 11:27-34; Jude 23].
  - F. WLC 166, *“Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him, but infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized.”* [Acts 8:36-37; 2:38; Genesis 17:7,9; Galatians 3:9,14; Colossians 2:11-12; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Matthews 28:19; Luke 18:15-16; Romans 11:16].
  - G. WLC 173, *“Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord’s supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.”* [1 Corinthians 11:27-34; Matthew 7:6; 1 Corinthians 5; Jude 23; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Corinthians 2:7].

H. WLC 177, “*The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once, ..., and that even to infants; whereas the Lord’s Supper is to be administered often, ..., and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.*” [Genesis 17:7,9; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Corinthians 7:14; 11:28-29].

## II. Further Biblical Principles and Guidelines:

- A. A credible profession consists of the expression of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, together with evidence of that faith and repentance in acts of love and obedience to God’s Law (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9; Matthew 3:8; John 14:15; James 2:14-26).
- B. The basic qualification for admission to the sacrament of Baptism is a credible profession of faith in Christ (Matthew 3:8; Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-38; 16:14-15, 31-34). When a man or woman makes such a profession, their children (and other permanent members of that household, who will be instructed in the true religion as part of that household) ought to be baptized (Genesis 17:7-14, 23-27; 18:19; Exodus 12:48; Acts 10:2; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Colossians 2:11-12).
- C. The basic qualification for admission to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a credible profession of faith in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:18-34; 12:3,13). Those who are not of maturity and ability to examine themselves ought not be admitted (1 Corinthians 11:28-29; see also Exodus 12:26; 2 Chronicles 30:18-19; Ezra 6:21).
- D. The same qualification of a credible profession of faith applies in the case of the baptism of a convert, and when that same convert approaches the Lord’s Table.
- i. Exodus 12:48. Once a stranger or sojourner was circumcised, with his household, he was eligible to partake of the Passover.
  - ii. Acts 2:41-47. Those baptised, upon their profession, were immediately found continuing in apostolic ordinances, including “*in breaking of bread*”, which is generally understood to refer to the Sacrament.
- E. Biblical examples of baptisms immediately following conversion are not evidence of a distinction between a credible profession, which is sufficient for baptism, and a so-called ‘accredited’ profession, which is required for admission to the Lord’s Table.
- i. Acts 16:14-15. Whatever the timing of the baptism of Lydia’s household in relation to her conversion (how long after), the standard is that she was judged “to be faithful to the Lord”. What needed to be added to this judgment in order to attend at the Table? Lydia had a credible profession which would have qualified her for the Table, whenever that was next administered.
  - ii. Acts 16:31-34. The Jailer’s household was baptised on the basis of the credible professions of those who believed. It is most probable that among

the baptised were some yet unconverted (i.e. young children), who would not be admitted to the Lord's Table whenever that was next administered. However, there is no reason in the passage to suggest that any professing believers would be kept from the sacrament until they were further 'proved'.

- iii. 1 Corinthians 11:28-29. These verses do not establish the assertion that there is required a higher standard for participation in the Lord's Supper than for the receiving of baptism (as regards converts from outside the visible Church). The context of the passage supports the view that the basic qualification to come to the Table is faith in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 12:12-13; 2 Corinthians 13:5), whereas these verses particularly emphasize how professing believers ought to prepare themselves in coming to the Table.
- F. Whereas all members are responsible to examine themselves and to partake worthily, the Elders of the Church, and especially the Ministers, are accountable to God in ensuring that only those with a credible profession, and without scandalous sin, are admitted to the Sacraments (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 5:4-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15; Matthew 7:6).
  - G. In evaluating any profession of faith, it must always be remembered that "God alone is Lord of the conscience" (WCF 20:2), who alone knows and judges the thoughts and intents of the heart (Jeremiah 17:10; Hebrews 4:12-13). Therefore, while the Elders, who are to judge on the fruit of the lips and the life, might see fit to prevent one, who they perceive to be ignorant or wicked, from admission to the Sacraments, yet such a one might truly be saved. Nevertheless, this knowledge ought not to dissuade Elders from fulfilling their duties, but rather to prayerfully seek wisdom and sound judgment from the Lord, taking pains, exercising caution and showing patience in their deliberations (See Leviticus 13).
  - H. While none of the saints are in this life made perfectly holy, and there may be times of declension and even falling into grievous sin, nonetheless there are certain scandalous sins and errors, which, when practiced or held without repentance, are evidence that such "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 6:9-10). Notwithstanding any profession made by such a person, these matters are grounds for disqualification from the admission to the Sacraments until there is clear evidence of repentance, both in regards to the professed convert and his household.

### III. Recommendations.

- A. That in considering those who apply for admission to the Sacraments, the Elders ought not to set any higher standard than that required by Scripture.
- B. That guidelines be formulated concerning the admitting of visitors to the Lord's Table, as well as those who are regular adherents but have not yet entered into formal membership of a congregation (See **Appendix "A"** for the approved and adopted Guidelines, as per the Extract Minute above).

- C. That an examination be made of the current guidelines with questions to be put to those applying to sit at the Lord's Table for the first time, as to whether any alterations are needed (See **Appendix "B"** for the approved and adopted reformulation of the Questions).

## 2. On the Administration of the Sacraments

- I. Some relevant statements from the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), the Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC), the Directory for the Public Worship of God (DPWG), and the Form of Church-Government (FOCG):
- A. WCF 27:3, *"The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them: neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers."* [Romans 2:28-29; 1 Peter 3:21; Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Matthew 26:27-28; 28:19-20].
- B. WCF 27:4, *"There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained."* [Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:20,23; 4:1; Hebrews 5:4].
- C. WLC 158, *"The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office."* [1 Timothy 3:2,6; Ephesians 4:8-11; Hosea 4:6; Malachi 2:7; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Jeremiah 14:15; Romans 10:15; Hebrews 5:4; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 1 Timothy 3:10; 4:14; 5:22].
- D. WLC 169, *"Christ hath appointed the ministers of his word, in the administration of this sacrament of the Lord's supper, to set apart the bread and wine from common use, by the word of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer; to take and break the bread, and to give both the bread and the wine to the communicants: who are, by the same appointment, to take and eat the bread, and to drink the wine, in thankful remembrance that the body of Christ was broken and given, and his blood shed, for them."* [1 Corinthians 11:23-24; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20].
- E. DPWG, Of Baptism (FPP 1994 edition, p.382), *"Baptism, as it is not unnecessarily to be delayed, so it is not to be administered in any case by any private person, but by a minister of Christ, called to be the steward of the mysteries of God."*
- F. FOCG, re. duties belonging to the pastor's office (FPP 1994 edition, p.400), *"To administer the sacraments."* [Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25; compared with 10:16).

## II. Further Biblical Principles and Guidelines:

- A. All believers are indwelt and equipped for service by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:3-7; 1 John 2:20,27), and are commanded and authorised to bear testimony to the Truth of God as they go about their callings (Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 12:11), yet not all believers are called and equipped to be Christ's ambassadors as preachers and teachers in His Church, that is, Ministers of the Word (1 Corinthians 12:28-30; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:4; Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 6:4).
- B. Christ has entrusted the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in His Church, to those He has called to be ministers of His Word, whether called in an extraordinary or ordinary manner. This is evident in the institution of the Sacraments (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25) and in biblical history (John 1:33; 4:1-2; Acts 2:41; 8:12,38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15,33). Hence Paul speaks of himself, being in the extraordinary office of Apostle, and Apollos, being in the ordinary office of Pastor and Teacher, as "*ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*" (1 Corinthians 4:1).
- C. Since, according to Christ's command, the administration of the Sacraments and the preaching of the Word belong together, and since none ought to preach unless God has called and sent them, therefore none ought to administer the Sacraments except for those called by God to preach His Word (Jeremiah 23:21,32; Romans 10:14-15; Hebrews 5:4). This calling and sending is first of all by God Himself, and is, in ordinary circumstances, afterward confirmed by the Church, that is, by examination and ordination (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, compared with v.10; 4:14; 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:2).
- D. Therefore, because the Sacraments are not private ordinances, but rather public and official, an essential part of the validity of a particular administration of a Sacrament is whether it is administered by one authorized by Christ so to do. This is not a matter of personal piety or good intention, but rather of authorization – Is the administrator in fact called by Christ, and recognised as such by Christ's Church?

## III. Recommendations.

- A. That the Sacraments be administered by none other than a minister of the Word, called and sent by God and, in ordinary circumstances, duly approved and lawfully ordained in that office.

### 3. On Baptism.

- I. Some relevant Statements from the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) and the Directory for the Public Worship of God (DPWG).
  - A. WCF 28:2, "*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.*” [Matthew 3:11; John 1:33; Matthew 28:19-20].

- B. WCF 28:3, “*Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary: but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.*” [Hebrews 9:10,19-22; Acts 2:41; 16:33; Mark 7:4].
- C. WCF 28:5, “*Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.*” [Luke 7:30 with Exodus 4:24-26; Romans 4:11; Acts 10:2,4,22,31,45,47; 8:13,23].
- D. DPWG, of Baptism (FPP 1994 edition, p.382), “*Baptism, as it is not unnecessarily to be delayed, so it is not to be administered in any case by any private person, but by a minister of Christ, called to be the steward of the mysteries of God.*”
- E. DPWG, of Baptism, (FPP 1994 edition, p.383), “*As he pronounceth these words, he is to baptise the child with water: which, for the manner of doing it, is not only lawful but sufficient, and most expedient to be, by pouring or sprinkling of the water on the face of the child, without adding any other ceremony.*”

## II. On the Timing of Baptism.

- A. In the case of those converted from outside of the visible Church, Baptism ought to be administered once there is sufficient evidence of a credible profession of faith in Christ (Matthew 3:8; Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-38; 16:14-15, 31-34), at which time all unbaptised members of the convert’s household ought to be baptized (Genesis 17:7-14, 23-27; Exodus 12:48; Acts 16:14-15, 31-34; 1 Corinthians 1:16; 7:14; Colossians 2:11-12).
- B. Whereas under the Old Covenant it was necessary that the sign of the covenant be administered when the man child was eight days old (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3; Luke 2:21; John 7:22), under the New Covenant there is no minimum or maximum time period set. The timing of circumcision was not a mere circumstance, but was particularly commanded by God and also became an integral part of the ceremonial system (Leviticus 12). Therefore, while the obligation to apply the sign of the covenant to the children of believers remains (Genesis 17:10), the law of ceremonies, including the exact timing of the application of the covenant sign (along with other “*days, and months, and times, and years*”, Galatians 4:10), is now abolished.
- C. Notwithstanding, while there are sometimes genuine reasons for a delay (for example, the sickness of a child; the absence of a Minister; great distance from a biblically-ordered congregation), ordinarily Baptism ought to be administered to the child as soon as is practically possible. Since God commands believing parents to have the covenant sign administered to their children (Genesis 17:10; Galatians 3:29; Acts 2:38-39), and since Baptism belongs to our children by divine right, we ought not to delay in bringing them to receive it (Matthew 19:13-15).



### III. On the Element of Baptism.

- A. The only outward element in Baptism for which we have warrant in Scripture is water (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 8:36; 10:47-48), to which nothing ought to be added, lest the commandment of God be made of none effect by the traditions of men (Matthew 15:6). Such additions which are to be rejected include oil, ashes, gestures, special gowns, instrument music, and flowers, all which tend towards and encourage superstitious and sacerdotal views of Baptism.
- B. Regarding the baptising of infants, and whether there is any particular significance in the posture of the Minister, while some suggest that the Minister ought to follow Christ's example in taking the child in his arms (Mark 10:16), and others suggest that the father ought to hold his own child, the Scriptures themselves do not give warrant for either view to be commanded.

### IV. On the Mode of Baptism.

- A. Principles that determine the most Biblical mode of Baptism, especially in relation to those who claim that immersion is the only valid mode.

The controversy relates to the amount of water used in Baptism, but is primarily concerned with the relation of the water to the person, that is, whether the person is to be immersed in water, or whether the water is to be applied to the person. The method of approach will be to consider the words used for Baptism, its significance, and then various Biblical examples.

- B. The words used for Baptism in Scripture do not mean "immerse".
- i. Whereas some in the Reformed Churches have conceded the Immersionist position, that the Greek words *baptidzo*, *bapto*, *baptismos* etc. must mean "immerse", yet Scriptural usage, which is determinative, denies this.
  - ii. 1 Corinthians 10:2 says that all Israel "*were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*" However, they were not immersed in the cloud which went before them, nor in the sea which they passed through on dry ground (Exodus 13:21; 14:22).
  - iii. Comparing Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38, which speak of washing (*baptidzo*) people, utensils and furniture, with John 2:6, which identifies the size of the waterpots found in Jewish homes, demonstrates that *baptidzo* does not mean "immerse" (Also Exodus 30:21; Numbers 19:17-18; 2 Kings 3:11).
  - iv. Hebrews 9:10 mentions those "*divers washings*" that belonged to the ceremonies. These washings (Greek, *baptismois*) included many sprinklings, both of water and blood (Hebrews 9:13,19-23; Leviticus 14:7,51; 16:14; Numbers 8:7; 19:18).
  - v. In the Septuagint (LXX) of Daniel 4:33, *bapto* referred to Nebuchadnezzar's body being "*wet with the dew of heaven*". This is not immersion, where a

body descends into water, but rather ‘affusion’, which is the application of water to a body (Also Matthew 26:23; Luke 16:24; Revelation 19:13).

- vi. Therefore, whatever the usage in Classical Greek, the Biblical usage does not support the contention that the words for Baptism necessarily mean “immersion”.
- C. The meaning assigned to Baptism in Scripture does not necessitate immersion as being the ordinary mode, but rather indicates ‘affusion’.
- i. Contrary to the claims of the Immersionists, Baptism does not especially signify burial and therefore there is no necessity for the mode of Baptism to reflect a burial.
    - a. Seeing as the Scriptural accounts of the burials of Christ and others bear no resemblance to a person’s being immersed in water, any analogy between burial and Baptism is indeterminate regarding mode.
    - b. Romans 6:3-5 is not directly relevant to the question of the mode of Baptism, since the Baptism referred to is not of water, but of union with Christ, which is by faith. Whereas Baptism does include the meaning of union with, and ingrafting into, Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-12), there is no indication in Scripture that certain imitative actions are required, or even possible.
  - ii. Christ taught Peter that a man can be counted as washed, although parts of his body remain dry, in the words, *“He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit”* (John 13:8).
  - iii. The primary significance of Baptism is cleansing or purification, with special regard to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Christ (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21), which cleansing is often said to be applied by way of pouring, shedding, or sprinkling etc. (Isaiah 44:3; 52:15; Ezekiel 36:25; Joel 2:28-29; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5; 2:2-4,16-18,33; 10:44-48; Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2), but not by way of immersion.
  - iv. Since the meaning of Baptism is commonly represented in Scripture by the pouring out of the Spirit and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and not as a descending into the Spirit or into Christ’s blood; and since the sign is analogous to the reality signified (Matthew 3:11; Acts 11:15-17); therefore the right mode of Baptism is pouring or sprinkling of water.
- D. None of the descriptions and examples of Baptism found in the New Testament Scriptures prove immersion, and, on the contrary, the language used and circumstances found in certain examples are favourable to the common mode of the application of water to the person by pouring or sprinkling.

- i. Baptism is frequently said to be administered with water, which language is appropriate if Baptism involves the application of water to the person, but not if it involves the application of the person in the water (by dipping). While in Matthew 3:11 and Mark 1:8, “*with*” translates the Greek word *ev* (which can mean “in”), the instrumental meaning is confirmed by the parallel statement regarding baptism with (not “in”) the Holy Ghost, as well as other places where an instrumental form of the noun is used (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Hebrews 10:22).
- ii. Instances where those baptised are recorded as coming up out of, or from, the water, are no proof of immersion. John, as well as Jesus, was “*in the Jordan*”, and would have come up out of it (Mark 1:9-10). Furthermore, Acts 8:38-39 records, “*And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptised him. And when they were come up out of the water.*” If there is no basis for the view that the one Baptising is immersed (which there is not), then there is no basis for Baptism as immersion in these accounts.
- iii. The mode of Christ’s own baptism is rightly understood as sprinkling, which is the implication of Christ’s words, “*Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*” (Matthew 3:15) in comparison with the account of the consecration of the Levites in Numbers 8:5-7. It was necessary for Christ to be baptised with water in order to fulfil some part of the Old Testament Law, which can only refer to the consecration of the priests and Levites to their offices (also Exodus 29:1,4,7). It was necessary for Christ to undergo this consecration upon taking up His public ministry, especially in regard to His office as Priest (Luke 3:21-23; Hebrews 7:11-14), which was therefore by sprinkling.
- iv. While it is outside the scope of this document to give detailed analysis of the various accounts of Baptism in the New Testament Historical writings, yet there are certain details and circumstances which indicate that the ordinary mode of Baptism is something other than immersion. These include such things as the number of Baptisms required in a short period of time by one or a few Ministers (Matthew 3:5-6; Acts 2:41); the lack of adequate facilities to immerse any person in, let alone a multitude (Acts 2:41; 8:36-39); and the immediacy of the Baptism after confession precluding access to a large body of water (Acts 9:17-19; 22:16; 16:33-40). Furthermore, the accounts of John baptising “*in the river of Jordan*” (Mark 1:5) and “*in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there*” (John 3:23), do not indicate anything as to the mode of Baptism, but rather explain how a multitude of Baptisms could occur in the midst of the barren wilderness.

## V. On Roman Catholic Baptism

- A. Roman Catholic Priests are not biblically qualified to administer the Sacraments (Hebrews 5:4). Roman Catholic Priests are in no sense Ministers of the Gospel, and are debarred from office because they are utterly disqualified. Therefore they may not administer the Ordinances of the Gospel, and any administration of any Ordinance by them is invalid (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

- B. The Roman Catholic Priesthood cannot, and must not, in any sense be described as the office of the Christian Ministry. It is a “priesthood” in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church i.e. having mediatorial powers and function, therefore the exercise of the office in any of its functions is illegitimate and administration of any ordinance is rendered invalid.
- C. Roman Baptism requires the subject to profess complete submission to the Dogma of Rome and to submit the heart and mind to the Pope as head of the church, and to serve the Roman Church without reservation. They further have to profess the way of salvation as taught by the Roman Church. These requirements in no sense accord with Christian Baptism. Christian Baptism requires profession of faith in Christ alone, on the part of the subject if they are of age, and on the part of at least one parent if the subject is a child. Therefore Roman Baptism can in no sense be described as Christian Baptism and the outward sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, and is therefore not in any sense Christian Baptism.
- D. The element used in the administration of Roman Baptism is not water alone, but generally a mixture of oil and water. What is not commanded is forbidden. Any admixture of water and another substance is not commanded and is therefore forbidden.
- E. The Roman view of the significance of Baptism does not in any sense accord with the teaching of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the person is regenerated when baptised, and that the subject cannot be saved unless they submit to Roman Baptism and to all the ordinances of the Roman Church.
- F. The Roman Church is the Church of the Antichrist, is a synagogue of Satan, and is in no sense a true church. Therefore the actions of the Roman Church and its Servants are rendered null and void.
- G. Roman Baptism is not Christian Baptism, is administered by men who are not biblically qualified to do so, and therefore cannot be legitimately recognised as such.

Footnote.

Some authors reference Circumcision administered in periods of Israel’s apostasy, and argue that as there were no grounds for “re-circumcision” therefore there are no grounds to declare Roman Catholic Baptism invalid, notwithstanding the apostasy of that church. The argument misses two very important points: 1. The ordinance of circumcision was administered as commanded by the Lord and had not been altered; and 2. The men administering the ordinance of circumcision could do so legitimately, and if they were Aaronic Priests still held legitimate office within the bounds of Christ’s Church notwithstanding their personal apostasy. Furthermore the Lord dealt judicially with men who intruded themselves upon the function of the priesthood (e.g. King Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:16-21), and who rendered service not commanded (e.g. Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10:1-2). Roman Catholic Baptism is “strange fire” in the sense that it corrupts the ordinance in the element used (oil and water mixed); it requires submission to, and profession of, the

damning heresies of Rome; it is administered by men who in no sense are ministers lawfully called; and signifies things other than ultimately being the outward sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace. The Roman Catholic Priesthood cannot, and must not, in any sense be described as the office of the Christian Ministry because it is a “priesthood” in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, therefore the exercise of the office in any of its functions is illegitimate and administration of any ordinance is rendered invalid.

VI. On Baptism by women and by other persons not lawfully authorised.

The Sacraments are to be administered by men lawfully called and Biblically qualified for office in Christ’s Church (1 Timothy 3 *passim*; Hebrews 5:4). Women are expressly forbidden from office in the Church (1 Corinthians 14:32-34; 1 Timothy 2:8-14). Therefore “Baptisms” administered by women, and others not Biblically qualified are not valid and must not be recognised as valid.

VII. Recommendations.

- A. That the element of water used by Christ and the Apostles be used in Baptism without addition or alteration.
- B. That the Biblical mode of Baptism, that is by pouring or sprinkling, be used without exception, notwithstanding any request for immersion. We affirm the words of R.L. Dabney, “The difference between us and immersionists is only this: whether the entire immersion of the body in water is essential to valid baptism. For we admit any application of water, by an ordained ministry, in the name of the Trinity, to be valid baptism.” [“Systematic Theology” (First Published 1871; Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985) 764]. Nevertheless, to acquiesce to such a request would only promote an unbiblical and sectarian view of Baptism.
- C. That Baptism be ordinarily be administered as soon as practically possible upon the establishment of a credible profession of faith of an unbaptised convert, or after the birth of a covenant child.

**4. On the Lord’s Supper.**

- I. Some relevant statements from the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), the Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC), and the Directory for the Public Worship of God (DPWG):
  - A. WCF 29:5, “*The outward elements in this sacrament, duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to Him crucified, as that, truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ; albeit in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.*” [Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:26-28].
  - B. WLC 169, “*Christ hath appointed the ministers of his word, in the administration of this sacrament of the Lord’s supper, to set apart the bread and wine from*

*common use, by the word of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer; to take and break the bread, and to give both the bread and the wine to the communicants: who are, by the same appointment, to take and eat the bread, and to drink the wine, in thankful remembrance that the body of Christ was broken and given, and his blood shed, for them.*” [1 Corinthians 11:23-24; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20].

- C. DPWG, of the Lord’s Supper, (FPP 1994 edition, p.384), *“The communion, or supper of the Lord, is frequently to be celebrated; but how often, may be considered and determined by the ministers, and other church-governors of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge... Where this sacrament cannot with convenience be frequently administered, it is requisite that publick warning be given the sabbath-day before the administration thereof: and that either then, or on some day of that week, something concerning that ordinance, and the due preparation thereunto, and participation thereof, be taught; ...”*
- D. DPWG, of the Lord’s Supper, (FPP 1994 edition, p.385), *“After this exhortation, warning, and invitation, the table being before decently covered, and so conveniently placed, that the communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it, the minister is to begin the action with sanctifying and blessing the elements of bread and wine set before him, (the bread in comely and convenient vessels, so prepared, that, being broken by him, and given, it may be distributed amongst the communicants; the wine also in large cups,) having first, in a few words, shewed that those elements, otherwise common, are now set apart and sanctified to this holy use, by the word of institution and prayer.”*

## II. On the Frequency of the Administration of the Lord’s Supper.

- A. Whereas under the Old Covenant, the Passover was celebrated annually according to the commandment of God (Exodus 12:1-20; Leviticus 23:5,6; Deuteronomy 16:3), the New Testament does not specify the exact frequency of the Lord’s Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:25-26 does teach a frequent administration (“oft” and “often”), but in view of other places where the word “often” can refer to either an annual or a daily sacrifice (Hebrews 9:25; 10:11), the exact frequency is left unspecified.
- B. Since no particular frequency is specified, no calendar of administration, whether more or less often, ought to be made a binding rule in the churches, notwithstanding Biblical principles that are to be applied in determining the frequency in a local situation.
- C. Among other considerations, Biblical principles to be taken into account in determining the frequency of the Lord’s Supper are:
- i. The priority of the Preached Word over the Sacraments (1 Corinthians 1:17);
  - ii. The necessity of an extra measure of self-examination and preparation required of professing Christians to attend the Lord’s Table, which is over and above that

required in attending the Public Worship of God (1 Corinthians 11:27-32; 2 Corinthians 13:5; see 2 Chronicles 30:18-20).

- iii. The danger of being “*righteous over much*” or “*over wise*” (Ecclesiastes 7:16), by reacting against a ritualistic formalism, on the one hand, or an experiential traditionalism, on the other hand.

#### D. Recommendations:

- i. That the Lord’s Supper be celebrated frequently in each congregation.
- ii. That the particular frequency of administration be determined by the local Session of Elders.

### III. On The Elements of the Lord’s Supper.

#### A. Introduction:

The substitution of Grape Juice for Wine in the Cup at the Lord’s Table is a comparatively recent innovation, dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century in North America (1891). It appears that the origin of the substitution lies in the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement (1878). Likewise the use of individual shot-glasses was introduced in North America at around the same time. Until this point in history the universal practice of the Church was the use of a single Cup containing Wine, and a single Loaf of Bread that was broken at the Table by the Presiding Minister. The Roman Church introduced the use of Wafers made specially for the Mass.

There have also been disputes over the use of leavened or unleavened Bread. The Greek Church advocating the use of Leavened Bread and the Latin Church advocating the use of Unleavened Bread.

It must be noted that that the efficacy of the Sacrament is not tied to the Elements, but to the Almighty work of the Holy Spirit, and the benefits are received by faith.

#### B. Some points to note in consideration of the Question:

- i. There is significance in the single cup.

It is called the “Cup of Communion” signifying the Christian’s Communion with Christ, and, in Christ, with the brethren.

- ii. There is significance in the content of the cup, and in particular the fact that it is wine everywhere in the Scripture record.

The etymology of *yayin* and *oinos* overwhelmingly demonstrates that the words refer to fermented grape juice, and not to unfermented grape juice. The Septuagint translates *yayin* as *oinos* (wine). The cup at the Passover contained wine, and the same element was administered at the Institution of the Lord’s Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:21 the Apostle Paul upbraids the Corinthians for getting drunk at the Table, but not for substituting wine for unfermented grape

juice, demonstrating that the content of the Cup was indeed wine in the plain sense of the word. Wine makes glad the heart of man (Psalm 104:15) and not only represents Christ's blood shed, but also points to the fullness of the believers joy and rejoicing in Christ and in particular in his finished work.

There is dispute among writers from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the present day about the meaning of the term "the fruit of the vine". Some argue that it must refer to unfermented grape juice because fermentation is started by yeasts that occur naturally on the skin of the grape, equating the yeast with the leaven in bread. However, this argument ignores the significance of the absence of leaven in the bread during the Passover week, emphasising the haste with which the children of Israel fled Egypt (Deuteronomy 16:3), and their due preparation for that departure (Exodus 12:11). Waiting for leavened bread to rise would have delayed their departure (Exodus 12:39).

Prior to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century the term "fruit of the vine" was commonly understood to refer to wine, and that is the sense that it was used by the Jews.

There is no warrant in Scripture to change the element in the Cup, nor to change the bread to unleavened bread. Indeed it seems that to do so would be making an alteration to the Supper that Christ has not commanded, nor authorised. Vows to avoid consumption of fermented grape juice do not override the Scriptural warrant to administer the Supper as instituted by Christ. The consequences of such a vow needs to be graciously and quietly pointed out to those who absent themselves from the Table on account of the content of the Cup, and they ought to be encouraged and exhorted to repent of the unscriptural vow and its consequences. If they will not partake of wine, a solution to their scruple is to take the Cup to their lips, but not to partake of the wine.

We must emphasise that this is not to say that, where the Supper is administered with elements other than Wine and Leavened Bread, e.g. multitude thimbles of unfermented grape-juice and tiny morsels of cracker, it has not been administered. The elements must closely approximate the Wine and Bread.

- iii. There is significance in the single uncut loaf.

It symbolises the unity in the Body of Christ, that is his people, and of course his body broken for us.

- iv. There is significance in the fact that the loaf at the Table is leavened. Among other things it demonstrates that the Lord's Supper is a New Testament economy ordinance. It further demonstrates that the church in the New Testament economy is not under the strictures of either the Ceremonial or the Judicial Law, and that the Old Testament Ordinances of the Passover and Circumcision have been abrogated and replaced by the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism.

The Lord's Supper was first administered on what we would call Thursday evening when leavened bread would be readily available in the house. Unleavened Bread pointed to the haste with which the Children of Israel fled



Egypt. The *Artos* (leavened bread) points to the fact that the Lord's Supper is a New Testament Institution and distinguishes it from the Passover. Both *Azuma* (unleavened bread, Matthew 26:17) and *Artos* (leavened bread, Matthew 26:26) are referred to in the accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper. The latter in connection with the Lord's Supper, and the former in connection with the Passover (Matthew 26:17; 26:26; see **Appendix "C"**). Furthermore the Scriptures always differentiate explicitly between leavened and unleavened bread (Exodus 12:15; Acts 12:3; 2:42).

- v. Christ instituted the ordinance with elements described in (ii), and (iv) above.

#### C. Recommendations:

- i. That the elements used by Christ, and evidently by the Apostles in the administration of the Lord's Supper be used without alteration.
- ii. That the consciences of the Lord's People be not trampled on, but that respectful instruction be given in the matter and that the solution proposed in Point B (ii) above be put to such as scruple at wine in the Cup.
- iii. That the content of the Cup only be substituted where it is impossible to obtain Wine.

#### IV. On the Mode of Communication at the Lord's Supper.

- A. While there is clear Scriptural warrant for insisting on wine in the Cup and leavened Bread in an uncut loaf as the elements of the Lord's Supper, there is insufficient warrant from Scripture to insist that the Lord's Supper be administered to Communicants seated at a table. When the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper the fact that the disciples were sitting at a table was incidental to the administration. From Exodus 12:11 it could be argued that the Children of Israel were to eat the Passover standing up ready to travel ("*and your staff in your hand*"), but at the institution of the Lord's Supper there is no indication that they stood to eat of the Passover, and then sat for the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14-21). There is, however, a principle of separation between those who and those who may not partake of the Lord's Supper (Jeremiah 15:19; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 21; 11:28-32). This principle extends to a means of making a clear separation between those partaking and those not partaking on any given occasion. It is therefore appropriate that Communicants sit apart from the general Congregation e.g. in the front row of seats, or at a table set for the purpose.
- B. While the administration of the Lord's Supper is in the hands of Christ's Ministers, the manner of how the elements of the Lord's Supper are to be distributed among the Communicants, once they have been set aside from common use by the word of institution, thanksgiving and prayer, is not specified in the Scriptures. At the institution of the Lord's Supper, we are told that Christ gave the elements to the disciples, but it is likely that the disciples passed the elements among themselves as they sat around the table (Mark 14:22-23). In the Gospel accounts of Christ's feeding the multitudes, the disciples made distribution but it was rightly Christ who ministered to and feed the people (John 6:5-14), which perhaps indicates the

propriety of Elders assisting the Minister in the distribution of the elements. There would seem to be allowance for distribution by Ministers, Elders, or Communicants.

### C. Communion Seasons and Associated Traditions.

The Scottish Church's "Communion Season" spontaneously originated in a time of revival. They have become a fixture in the practice of the Scottish Church without clear Scriptural warrant. There is no example of such "seasons" in connection with the administration of the Lord's Supper. The Sacraments were administered *in simpliciter*, without additional services or meetings. It is legitimate for services of worship to be held at any time, and in connection with the Lord's Supper if the governing Session sees a necessity. However there is no warrant in Scripture for the implementation of "Communion Seasons" as a standing practice in connection with the administration of the Lord's Supper.

Likewise the practice of distributing Communion Tokens has no basis in Scripture. The practice arose at a time when large numbers of brethren from different churches gathered at "Communion Seasons". The intending communicants were handed lead tokens that were handed to the elders when the communicants came forward to the table. Intending communicants without a token were not admitted to the table.

There is no example expressed or implied of this practice in the Scriptures. The basis of admission to the Lord's Table is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the Elders overseeing the administration of the Lord's Supper may legitimately enquire of a person's faith in Christ prior to admitting them to the table, but may not debar a believer on the grounds that they did not receive a 'Token', because they were not at the Service at which the 'Tokens' were distributed. In so doing they are guilty of "*laying aside the commandment of God*" (Mark 7:7-10).

### D. Recommendations:

- i. That Communicants sit apart from the main Body of the Congregation either in the front row or rows, or at a table set for the purpose.
- ii. That the Communicants do not kneel at the Table or elsewhere to receive the elements.
- iii. That the principle of separation be maintained, and that Communicants not sit dispersed through the Congregation.
- iv. That Sessions be discouraged from implementing "Communion Seasons".
- v. That Sessions be dissuaded from adopting the practice of distributing "Communion Tokens" to intending communicants, and from introducing any practice that does not have clear warrant from the Scriptures.

## **Appendix “A”**

### **Guidelines concerning the admitting of visitors to the Lord’s Table, as well as those who are regular adherents but have not yet entered into formal membership of a congregation**

- The Lord’s Supper belongs to the Lord and all who are in Him are to be welcomed to the Table.
- The same standard of admission, that is, a credible profession of faith in Christ, applies to all, whether members, visitors, or regular adherents who have not yet entered into membership.
- The solemn warning of God’s judgment upon those who partake unworthily applies to all, and must be set before those intending to partake of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).
- The Elders of each congregation, and especially the Ministers, are required to ensure that only those with a credible profession, and without scandalous sin, are admitted to the Sacraments (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 5:4-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15; Matthew 7:6). This is also in regard to visitors and regular adherents who have not yet entered into membership.
- Matters to be considered in determining a credible profession, by each person themselves, but also by the Elders in welcoming them to the Table, include the following:
  - o They must have living faith in Christ, and have lives that reflect the reality of their profession of faith, and have been baptised (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9-10).
  - o They must be committed to the Body of Christ as believers who see that it is important to be part of a church (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
  - o They must also ask themselves whether or not they have unresolved conflicts with fellow-Christians, as at the Lord's Table we express union with each other and the Lord (Matthew 5:23-24).

## **Appendix “B”**

### **Questions Put to Individuals Applying to Sit at the Lord’s Table for the First Time, or requesting Baptism on Profession of Faith.**

1. What has brought you to take this step? What is your understanding of the significance of this step?
2. What do you understand to be the fundamental qualification for Baptism and to sit at the Lord’s Table?
3. What is your understanding of the person and work of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity with particular reference to the work and application of redemption?
4. Regarding union with Christ:
  - What is your understanding and experience of conviction of sin?
  - What is your understanding and experience of the reality and nature of repentance and faith in Christ in the light of Scripture?

5. Regarding communion with Christ:
  - What is your experience and practice with particular reference to prayer, the reading of the Scriptures, and attending upon the preaching of the Word of God?
  - What is your understanding of the reality of communion with Christ?
  
6. Regarding obedience to Christ:
  - Is it your heart's desire to obey all the precepts of Christ?
  - What are your motives in obeying God's commandments?
  - What is your understanding of repentance in this context?
  - What is your understanding of the place of the Moral Law (the Ten Commandments) in the life of a believer as the rule of life?
  - What is your understanding of the absolute necessity of enabling grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in enabling you to walk in obedience to the Moral Law?
  
7. What is your understanding of the necessity of "keeping the heart diligently...?"
  
8. What is your understanding of, and belief in, the promises of Scripture, and in particular what promises, if any, are particularly precious to you?
  
9. What is your view of heaven, and what is particularly precious about heaven to you?

### **Appendix "C"**

In all the references to the Lord's Supper in Scripture the bread is referred to as "*artos*" ("leavened bread") as opposed to "*azuma*" ("unleavened bread"). This distinction is made in the accounts of the institution of the Supper by the Lord.

Institution of the Lord's Supper:

Matthew 26:17 ..."feast of unleavened bread" "*azuma*" vs Matthew 26:26 ..."took bread"... "*artos*".

See also Mark 14:12 vs Mark 14:22; Luke 22: 1,7, vs Luke 22:19,22,35; John 13:18;

Administration of the Lord's Supper:

Acts 2:46; Acts 20:7,11; 1 Corinthians 10:16,17; 1 Corinthians 11:23,26,27,28. In every instance the word "*artos*" is used.