

GCC Understanding of Baptism

We affirm Baptism is. . .

- A Sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be continued in His Church until His return (Matt. 28:19-20).¹
- Indicative of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, so that we too may walk in newness of life to be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Rom 6).
- A prerequisite to the privileges & responsibilities of the Lord's Supper and to church membership (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:37-38, 41-42).²
- A sanctifying act of God whereby He marks & sets apart the recipient for His own purposes.
- Beneficial not for the recipient only, but for the congregation. The entire church. . .
 - Publicly affirms the recipient's union with Christ, and commits him to our Lord and the community of saints.³
 - Remembers afresh their own death to self, and newness of life to Christ.⁴
- Only for those who do actually and credibly profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 3:11; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:4-6; Col. 2:12).
- The immersing of the believer in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by a minister of the Gospel, or duly appointed representative of the church.⁵

About baptism, we affirm...

It is disobedience to Christ's command to condemn or neglect this ordinance (Acts 22:16). It does not bestow regeneration, yet it is a true means of sanctifying grace. Not all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated (Acts 8:13-24). The benefits of Baptism are bestowed only where faith is present. Believer's Baptism is to be administered but once to any person because its effectiveness is enduring.⁶

¹ Our current understanding is that "sacrament" and "ordinance" may be used interchangeably, however, we do prefer sacrament because it better reflects the mystery of Christ's participation during administration. Here it refers to the common meaning of a sacred rite as a means of grace, though not salvific.

"Sacraments (Lat. *sacramentum*, "something set apart"): Formal religious rites that symbolize a spiritual reality. Early Latin fathers of the Church used the term to translate the Greek word *mysterion* ("mystery") to signify a special sacred rite or ordinance through which the believer received some blessing from God. Today theologians commonly refer to a sacrament as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to believers. The rite itself has been ordained by Christ. Protestants recognize two such sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's

Supper).” (R. Wallace, BDOT, 465-66; A. Peisker, BDT, 465). (from *Dictionary of Hermeneutics*, © 2005 Gospel Publishing House. All rights reserved.).

See also GCC’s written understanding of Sacraments, and explanation of signs & seals.

² Poythress, Vern, <http://frame-poythress.org/indifferentism-and-rigorism/>, accessed 2/18/2016.

We recognize instances of extraordinary circumstances which may allow for participation in the Lord’s Supper prior to Baptism. These should be examined by the elders on an exceptional, individual basis. We also acknowledge the need in young believers to delay full voting membership privileges & responsibilities despite their fully affirmed membership in the family of faith. See GCC whitepaper on membership for more detail.

³ Bobby Jamieson, <http://9marks.org/article/baptism-is-a-churchs-act/>, 1/19/2016, accessed 2/8/2016.

⁴ Gunderson, David, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/book-reviews-40-questions-about-baptism-and-the-lords-supper>, accessed 2/8/2016.

⁵ We recognize only those who are faithful, male members of GCC, endorsed by the elders may be representative of the Church at GCC.

⁶ See [GCC Constitution](#) for accepted forms for those having received prior baptism.