

DECLARATION I

A Joint Declaration of the Churches of the Netherlands

Baptism

We accept baptism to be a sacred sign, entrusted to us by Christ, which binds us with Him and with each other. However differently we may think on various points, on this we are one: baptism is a token of God's grace, which allows us to share in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-4), and which brings us to new life. Those who receive this holy sign may regard themselves as members of Christ's Church universal and eternal. So, they are one in the Spirit, and have become one Body (1 Cor 12:13).

We confess that the history of the practice and theology of baptism has also been one of conflict. To date, different perspectives on baptism keep some churches apart. Mutual recognition of baptism begins when believers of divergent traditions share their faith stories and acknowledge the work of the Spirit in their different baptismal practices.

We, the undersigned churches, fully recognize each baptism which, in faith and obedience to the commission of Jesus (Matt 28:19), is solemnized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and which, within a given faith community and following its authorized procedures, is administered with water. A baptism, so solemnized and received, is administered once and is unrepeatable.

In signing, we confirm that we recognize as valid baptisms administered in other signatory churches, provided they fulfil the criteria stated above. The baptismal form may vary: in some instances, full immersion in water may be practiced, in others, pouring or *individual* sprinkling.

We also, of course, recognize baptisms administered in churches who have not signed this declaration, if said baptisms are performed according to the aforementioned criteria. We cordially invite churches and Christian faith communities who have not yet signed this common statement to do so.

We heartily rejoice in each person who is baptized, yet realize that God's grace is not confined to this single sacrament or holy sign. We acknowledge hereby also our brothers and sisters, who belong to faith communities which stand within the Christian tradition, yet do not practice baptism.

This mutual recognition of baptism is an expression of our conviction that Jesus Christ is the foundation of our unity (Gal 3:27-28). We profess, in accordance with the *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* text drawn up by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (Lima, 1982, §6), that one baptism in Christ is 'a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship'.

englische Übersetzung der Erklärung der wechselseitigen Anerkennung der Taufe in den Niederlanden; Quelle: Rat der Kirchen in den Niederlanden
<http://www.raadvanckerken.nl/pagina/362/home>