

Report of the Commission on Christian Worship

The Commission on Christian Worship met twice since General Synod 2008: October 16-18, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and February 10-11, 2009, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The commission's agenda included ongoing work related to:

- The RCA's participation with the Consultation on Common Texts.
- A joint hymnal project between the RCA and the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
- Baptism and the reaffirmation of baptism.
- Worship for General Synod.

Liturgies for the Lord's Supper

The commission's primary focus since 2005 has been related to an overture from the Classis of Central Iowa:

To affirm the Commission on Christian Worship's work to create additional liturgies of the Lord's Supper, and to ensure that these liturgies are briefer than those currently available; and further, to request that the commission define the essential components and expectations of the liturgy, for report to the General Synod of 2007 (*MGS 2005*, R-95, p. 373).

After extensive consultation throughout the RCA and with representatives from other Reformed bodies (cf. *MSG 2008*, pp. 240-242), the commission interpreted R-95 to reflect three basic desires:

1. A desire for brevity (shorter options for celebration of the Lord's Supper).
2. A desire for diversity (options suited for a variety of settings).
3. Clarity (on what is "essential" for a genuine celebration of communion).

In response to these three desires, the commission recommended that the General Synod of 2008 adopt the following amendment to the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 11c, for recommendation to the classes for approval (addition is underlined):

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered, if possible, at least once every three months in every church. "The Office for the Administration of the Lord's Supper" or a liturgy approved by General Synod for occasional use shall be read. All baptized Christians present who are admitted to the Lord's Supper are to be invited to participate (*MGS 2008*, R-56, p. 242).

The General Synod of 2008 approved R-56.

In response to that approval, the commission presents four liturgies to be approved by General Synod for occasional use. The first three of these liturgies (the Lima Liturgy, the Consultation on Church Union Liturgy, and the Formula of Agreement Liturgy) have been previously recommended by General Synods and offer diversity for settings looking for variety. The fourth is a dramatically shorter liturgy for settings where the constitutional liturgy may be inappropriate.

Recommendations**R-56**

To commend to the congregations of the Reformed Church in America the Consultation on Church Union Liturgy, the Lima Liturgy, and the Formula of Agreement Liturgy for occasional use. (ADOPTED)

R-57

To commend to the congregations of the Reformed Church in America "Occasional Use Liturgy No. 1" for occasional use. (ADOPTED)

Future Plans

It is the commission's intent to continue to solicit, create, and recommend occasional-use liturgies for approval by the General Synod in future years.

The commission also plans to continue working on resources to help congregations celebrate and reaffirm baptism and looks forward to presenting them in 2010.

Gratitude

The Commission on Christian Worship joyfully and gratefully celebrates the participation of Kathy Davelaar and Lisa VanderWal and their service to the commission and the denomination over the past six years. Their enthusiasm, wisdom, and experience have been integral to the commission's work and will be sorely missed.

LIMA EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Upon recommendation by the Commission on Christian Worship, the 1986 synod commended the Lima Eucharistic Liturgy to the churches "as a provisional form for occasional use" (MGS 1986, R-1, p. 168). The Lima Eucharistic Liturgy is recommended for occasional use by churches, presumably in ecumenical settings and within the context of a particular congregation's worship when the RCA's relationship to the universal Christian church is emphasized. Therefore, approval of this liturgy for use by RCA congregations should not be understood to imply regular use or adoption of the form.

P = Presiding Minister

C = Congregation

O = Another Celebrant

Liturgy of the Eucharist**PREPARATION**

- O. Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, you are the giver of this bread, fruit of the earth and of human labour, let it become the bread of Life.
- C. **Blessed be God, now and for ever!**
- O. Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, you are the giver of this wine, fruit of the vine and of human labour, let it become the wine of the eternal Kingdom.
- C. **Blessed be God, now and for ever!**
- O. As the grain once scattered in the fields and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside are now reunited on this table in bread and wine, so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together from the corners of the earth into your Kingdom.
- C. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

DIALOGUE

- P. The Lord be with you.
 C. **And also with you.**
 P. Lift up your hearts.
 C. **We lift them to the Lord.**
 P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
 C. **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

PREFACE

- P. Truly it is right and good to glorify you, at all times and in all places, to offer you our thanksgiving O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Through your living Word you created all things, and pronounced them good. You made human beings in your own image, to share your life and reflect your glory. When the time had fully come, you gave Christ to us as the Way, the Truth and the Life. He accepted baptism and consecration as your Servant to announce the good news to the poor.

At the last supper Christ bequeathed to us the eucharist, that we should celebrate the memorial of the cross and resurrection, and receive his presence as food. To all the redeemed Christ gave the royal priesthood and, in loving his brothers and sisters, chooses those who share in the ministry, that they may feed the Church with your Word and enable it to live by your Sacraments.

Wherefore, Lord, with the angels and all the saints, we proclaim and sing your glory:

SANCTUS

- C. **Holy, Holy, Holy...**

EPICLESIS I

- P. O God, Lord of the universe, you are holy and your glory is beyond measure. Upon your eucharist send the life-giving Spirit, who spoke by Moses and the prophets, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary with grace, who descended upon Jesus in the river Jordan and upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

May the outpouring of this Spirit of Fire transfigure this thanksgiving meal that this bread and wine may become for us the body and blood of Christ.

- C. **Veni Creator Spiritus!**

INSTITUTION

- P. May this Creator Spirit accomplish the words of your beloved Son, who, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat: this is my body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. After supper he took the cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this for the remembrance of me. Great is the mystery of faith.
- C. **Your death, Lord Jesus, we proclaim!
 Your resurrection we celebrate!
 Your coming in glory we await!**

ANAMNESIS

- P. Wherefore, Lord, we celebrate today the memorial of our redemption: we recall the birth and life of your Son among us, his baptism by John, his last meal with the apostles, his death and descent to the abode of the dead; we proclaim Christ's resurrection and ascension in glory, where as our Great High Priest he ever intercedes for all people; and we look for his coming at the last. United in Christ's priesthood, we present to you this memorial: Remember the sacrifice of your Son and grant to people everywhere the benefits of Christ's redemptive work.
- C. **Maranatha, the Lord comes!**

EPICLESIS II

- P. Behold, Lord, this eucharist which you yourself gave to the Church and graciously receive it, as you accept the offering of your Son whereby we are reinstated in your Covenant. As we partake of Christ's body and blood, fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may be one single body and one single spirit in Christ, a living sacrifice to the praise of your glory.
- C. **Veni Creator Spiritus!**

COMMEMORATIONS

- O. Remember, Lord, your one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, redeemed by the blood of Christ. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, and preserve it in peace.

Remember, Lord, all the servants of your Church: bishops, presbyters, deacons, and all to whom you have given special gifts of ministry.

(Remember especially...)

Remember also all our sisters and brothers who have died in the peace of Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone: guide them to the joyful feast prepared for all peoples in your presence, with the blessed Virgin Mary, with the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs...

and all the saints for whom your friendship was life.

With all these we sing your praise and await the happiness of your Kingdom where with the whole creation, finally delivered from sin and death, we shall be enabled to glorify you through Christ our Lord;

- C. **Maranatha, the Lord comes!**

CONCLUSION

- P. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, all honour and glory is yours, Almighty God and Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.
- C. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

- O. United by one baptism in the same Holy Spirit and the same Body of Christ, we pray as God's sons and daughters:
- C. **Our Father...**

THE PEACE

- O. Lord Jesus Christ, you told your apostles: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church; in order that

your will be done, grant us always this peace and guide us toward the perfect unity of your Kingdom for ever.

C. Amen.

P. The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C. And also with you.

O. Let us give one another a sign of reconciliation and peace.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

P. The bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ, the cup of blessing for which we give thanks is the communion in the Blood of Christ.

LAMB OF GOD

C. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

COMMUNION

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

P. In peace let us pray to the Lord: O Lord our God, we give you thanks for uniting us by baptism in the Body of Christ and for filling us with joy in the eucharist. Lead us towards the full visible unity of your Church and help us to treasure all the signs of reconciliation you have granted us. Now that we have tasted of the banquet you have prepared for us in the world to come, may we all one day share together the inheritance of the saints in the life of your heavenly city, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C. Amen.

FINAL HYMN

WORD OF MISSION

BLESSING

P. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour and give you peace. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C. Amen.

CONSULTATION ON CHURCH UNION LITURGY

This liturgy, like the Lima Eucharistic Liturgy, is recommended for occasional use by the churches, particularly in ecumenical settings, but also, perhaps, within the context of a particular congregation's worship when the relationship to the universal church is being emphasized. Therefore, approval of this liturgy for use by RCA congregations should not be understood to imply regular use or adoption of the form (MGS 1988, p. 213).

M = Minister

C = Congregation

Service of the Table

THE PEACE

M: The peace of Christ be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

(The ministers and people may stand and exchange signs and words of God's peace.)

PRESENTING THE GIFTS

GREAT THANKSGIVING

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

THE PREFACE

M: It is right and good to give you thanks, Almighty God, for you are the source of light and life. You made us in your image and called us to new life in Jesus Christ. In all times and places your people proclaim your glory in unending praise:

(Local congregations and eucharistic communities are encouraged to make their own decisions about the content and style of the preface, focusing on general themes stressing the creation, the season or day in the church year, or a local occasion.)

C: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

M: We remember with joy the grace by which you created all things and made us in your own image. We rejoice that you called a people in covenant to be a light to the nations. Yet we rebelled against your will. In spite of the prophets and pastors sent forth to us, we continued to break your covenant.

In the fullness of time, you sent your only son to save us,
Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of your favored one, Mary,
sharing our life, he reconciled us to your love.

At the Jordan your Spirit descended upon him, anointing him to preach the good news of your reign.

He healed the sick and fed the hungry,
manifesting the power of your compassion.

He sought out the lost and broke bread with sinners,
witnessing the fullness of your grace.

We beheld his glory.
On the night before he died for us, Jesus took bread;
giving thanks to you, he broke the bread
and offered it to his disciples, saying:

“Take this and eat; this is my body which is given for you,
do this in remembrance of me.”

Taking a cup, again he gave thanks to you,
shared the cup with his disciples and said:

“This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood.
Drink from this all of you.
This is poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.”

After the meal our Lord was arrested, abandoned by his followers and beaten.

He stood trial and was put to death on a cross.

Having emptied himself in the form of a servant, and being obedient even to death,
he was raised from the dead
and exalted as Lord of heaven and earth.

Through him you bestow the gift of your Spirit
uniting your church, empowering its mission,
and leading us into the new creation you have promised.

Gracious God, we celebrate with joy the redemption you won for us in Jesus Christ.

Grant that in praise and thanksgiving we may be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight, that our lives may proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C: Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.**

M: Loving God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon these gifts,
that they may be for us the body and blood
of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Grant that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed through his blood,
serving and reconciling all people to you.

Remember your church, scattered upon the face of the earth:
gather it in unity and preserve it in truth.

Remember the saints who have gone before us
especially _____ and _____.

(here may occur special names)

In communion with them and with all creation,
we worship and glorify you always:

Through your Son Jesus Christ

with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church,
all glory and honor is yours, Almighty God,
now and forever.
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

(The minister breaks the bread in silence or while saying:)

M: The bread which we break,
 Is it not a sharing in the Body of Christ?
 Because there is one bread,
 we who are many are one body,
 for we all partake of the one bread.
 The wine which we drink,
 is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?
 The cup which we bless
 is the communion in the blood of Christ.

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

FORMULA OF AGREEMENT LITURGY

In 1998 the General Synod examined the order of worship prepared by the Lutheran-Reformed Subcommittee on Worship for joint celebrations of the adoption of full communion between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Reformed Church in America. Upon the recommendation of its review committee, the synod voted "to encourage RCA congregations to make occasional use of the order of worship and the guidelines prepared by the Lutheran-Reformed Subcommittee on Worship" (MGS 1998, p. 275).

M = Minister
C = Congregation

Eucharist

OFFERING OF GIFTS

PRAYER

M: As the bread broken was first scattered on the hills,
 then was gathered and became one,
 so let your church be gathered
 from the ends of the earth into your kingdom
 for yours is glory and power through all ages.
 Blessed be God, forever and ever. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

M: The Lord be with you.
C: **And also with you.**
M: Lift up your hearts.
C: **We lift them to the Lord.**
M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.
 Loving God, the Source of all,
 we thank you and praise you
 with our lips and in our lives
 that having created us and all things through your Word
 you welcome and accept our prayer and praise.
 For the goodness of creation
 and the glory of redemption to which you call us,
 we praise you.
 For the law of holiness inviting our obedience
 and the call of prophets, rebuking our disobedience
 we praise you.
 With all that is, seen and unseen,
 and with all the faithful
 of every time and place,
 we join in this hymn
 of praise and thanksgiving:

SANCTUS

**C: Holy, holy, Lord most holy, God of power and God of might;
 Heaven and earth reveal your glory, hail, hosanna, Lord of light!
 Blessed be the coming Savior, hail, hosanna, Lord of light!**

M: Loving God, the Holy One,
 we offer you praise and thanksgiving
 over this bread and cup
 because in Jesus Christ,
 your only begotten
 you have forever joined yourself to us,
 uniting heaven and earth.
 Now therefore we gratefully recall and remember
 the wonder of his incarnation,
 his birth as one of us,
 his baptism for our sin,
 his compassion for our suffering,
 his intimacy with our frailty,
 his rebuke of our pride,
 his bearing of the cross with its death
 and his rising from the tomb by the power of God.
 It was he who on the night when he was betrayed
 took a loaf of bread and gave thanks,
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying:
 Take, and eat; this is my body given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.
 Again, after supper, he took the cup,
 gave thanks and gave it to all to drink saying:
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood
 shed for you and for all people
 for the forgiveness of sin.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.
 According to his command and promise of presence,
 we affirm the mystery of faith:

**C: Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.**

M: Loving God, Creative Power,
blessing your Name, we seek your Spirit.
Come to us and bless these gifts of bread and wine,
that they may be for us by faith the body and blood of Christ,
the sign and seal of our forgiveness in him
and our adoption as the children of God.
As we eat and drink together
make us one with Christ and one in Christ;
a sign of his eternal reign in all the world.
This sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving
we offer you, loving God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God to ages of ages.

C: Amen.

M: With the confidence of the children of God, let us pray:

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Tune: St. Columba

**C: O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you suffered death our lives to save: have mercy now, we pray.
O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you set us free from guilt and grave, have mercy now, we pray.
O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
eternal peace with God you made, give us your peace, we pray.**

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

MUSIC AT THE DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

M: O God the One God, you have opened wide your hands and satisfied the desire
of your living creatures. You have fed us with one food

C: that we may be one.

M: You have filled us with your presence

C: that we may be one.

M: You have showered on us your Spirit

C: that we may be one:

M: You in Christ, and Christ in us,

C: That all may be one.

- M: Send us into the world as your servants, fed and on fire with the Spirit, that the world may know that you have loved them, through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise with you and the Holy Spirit, to the ages of ages.
- C: **Amen.**

OCCASIONAL USE LITURGY NO. 1

M = Minister

C = Congregation

COMMUNION LITURGY

- M: Beloved in the Lord Jesus, the meal which we are about to celebrate is a feast of remembrance, communion, and hope.
- C: **We come to remember that Jesus was sent into the world to assume our flesh and blood, to become God with us, that we might be redeemed.**
- M: We come to have communion with this same Christ who has promised to be with us even to the end of the world.
- C: **We come in hope, believing that this bread and this cup are a pledge and a fore-taste of a new heaven and a new earth, where we shall behold God.**
- M: Jesus said, I was hungry and you gave me food;
- C: **I was thirsty and you gave me drink.**
- M: Here is the bread of life given for us;
- C: **let all who hunger come and eat.**
- M: Here is the fruit of the vine, poured out for us;
- C: **let all who thirst come and drink.**
- M: The Lord be with you.
- C: **And also with you.**
- M: Lift up your hearts!
- C: **We lift them up to the Lord.**
- M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- C: **It is right to give our thanks and praise!**
- M: Holy and right it is to give you thanks and praise at all times and in all places, O God our Creator. Source of all life and goodness, You created heaven with all its hosts and the earth with all its plenty and preserve us by your providence.
- C: **When we disobeyed, you sent Jesus to deliver us from sin and death and free us to joyful obedience.**
- M: With your whole church on earth and with all the company of heaven we proclaim your glory.
- The Sanctus may be used here, if desired.
Examples: *Sing! A New Creation* 250, 251, 252, 259]
- M: Most righteous God, we remember in this meal the perfect sacrifice offered once on the cross by our Lord Jesus Christ for the sin of the whole world.
- C: **United with Christ in his suffering, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the power of God to triumph over evil, we wait in joyful hope for the fullness of God's reign.**

M: Send your Holy Spirit upon us, we pray,
 that the bread which we break
 and the cup which we bless
 may be to us the communion of the body and blood of Christ.
 Grant that, being joined together in him,
 we may attain to the unity of the faith
 and grow up in all things into Christ our Lord.

**C: And as this grain has been gathered from many fields into one loaf,
 and these grapes from many hills into one cup,
 grant, O Lord, that your whole Church
 may soon be gathered from the ends of the earth
 into your kingdom.
 Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**

M: The Lord Jesus, the same night he was betrayed, took bread;
 and when he had given thanks,
 he broke it

(The minister shall break the bread.)

and gave it to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you:
 do this in remembrance of me."

(Lifting the cup, the minister shall say:)

After the same manner also, he took the cup when they had supped,
 saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood:
 this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

(In partaking of the bread it shall be said:)

The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.

(In partaking of the cup it shall be said:)

The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION