ORDER FOR COMMISSIONING A COMMISSIONED PASTOR

When an elder has been approved by a classis to serve as a commissioned pastor and a commissioning to a specific form of service within the classis is deemed appropriate (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 14), the classis shall appoint a time and place for the commissioning service. Prior to the service the classis shall satisfy itself that the person being presented for commissioning is an ordained elder.

The service shall be conducted with praise to God and in a spirit of joy and solemnity. A brief sermon suitable to the occasion shall be preached. The presiding officer of the classis shall begin, following the proclamation of the Word in the Response to God. The presiding officer appropriately presides at the font, which signifies the common ministry given to all Christians at baptism.

PRESENTATION

Beloved in the Lord,
we have come to commission
(an elder or elders)
into a specific form of service within Christ’s holy church
as a commissioned pastor.
Christ alone is the source of all Christian ministry,
through the ages calling women and men to serve.

By the Holy Spirit all who believe
and are baptized receive a ministry
to witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and
to love and serve those with whom they live and work.
We are ambassadors for Christ,
who reconciles and makes whole.
We are the salt of the earth;
we are the light of the world.

Following his resurrection and ascension
Christ gave gifts to the church.
These gifts were “that some would be apostles, some prophets,
some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,
to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
for building up the body of Christ.”
We stand within a tradition
where deacons, elders, and ministers of Word and sacrament
are called and empowered to fulfill an ordained ministry
which enables the whole mission of the church.

The Classis of _________________
has approved the specific form of commissioned service given to NN (using full name),
(the name of the position to which the elder is to be commissioned is publicly named).

NN (Christian name only, no surname), we invite you to come forward
as a sign that you accept this ministry.

The candidate comes and stands by the baptismal font, facing the presiding officer, before the classis and gathered people; the presiding officer continues:

Commissioned pastors are elders who are trained,
commissioned, and supervised by a classis
for a specific ministry within a classis.
They are called to build up Christ’s church,
to proclaim God’s Word,
to declare forgiveness through Jesus Christ,
to call publicly on the name of the Lord
on behalf of God’s people, and
to celebrate Christ’s holy sacraments,
baptizing and presiding at the Lord’s Supper.
They are to build up and equip those with whom they work,
show the gospel of God’s grace in word and deed,
share people’s joys and sorrows,
encourage the faithful,
recall those who fall away,
help the sick and the dying,
and serve with the whole church
in its ministry to the world.

VOWS

N (Christian name only, no surname),
so all may know you are both willing and able
to accept this ministry of Christ’s church,
the classis asks you to speak your vows publicly as you enter this ministry.

Do you confess together with us and the church throughout all ages
your faith in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

The presiding officer shall invite the congregation to stand:

Let us all stand with N__________, confessing our faith
in the words of the Apostles’ Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
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 he will come to judge the living and the dead.
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.

The congregation is seated; the candidate shall remain standing.

Do you believe in your heart
that you are called by Christ’s church,
and therefore by God,
to this specific form of commissioned service?

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

Do you believe the books of the Old and New Testaments
to be the Word of God and the perfect doctrine of salvation,
rejecting all contrary beliefs?

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

Will you proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
upholding the witness of Holy Scripture against all schisms and heresies?

I will, and I ask God to help me.
Will you be diligent in your study of Holy Scripture and in your use of the means of grace? Will you pray for God’s people and lead them by your own example in faithful service and holy living?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

Will you accept the church’s order and governance, participating in an annual evaluation of your performance by the classis, and submitting to ecclesiastical discipline should you become delinquent in either life or doctrine?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

Will you be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America, using all your abilities to further its Christian mission here and throughout the world?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

Will you strive to fulfill faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully the duties required of you in the work to which you are being commissioned, following our Lord’s example of humble service?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

DECLARATION

N (Christian name only, no surname)
The classis asks you to declare publicly your commitment to commissioned ministry among us.

At this point in the service the elder to be commissioned reads the “Declaration for Commissioned Pastors.” (The declaration is found in the appendix to the Book of Church Order, The Formularies of the Reformed Church in America.)

COMMISSIONING

The person designated by the classis shall deliver the charge to the commissioned pastor. The charge which follows shall be read. Additional brief counsel, if authorized by the classis, may be made before it.

Beloved servant in Christ, be attentive to yourself and to all the flock given to your care by the Holy Spirit. Love Christ: feed his lambs, tend his sheep. Be an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Attend to reading, prayer, study, preaching, and teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

N __________________, guard what has been entrusted to you. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.

The presiding officer shall continue, addressing the representatives of the specific service to which this person is being commissioned. If the ministry is under the direct supervision of the classis or its committee/s, or if the classis is acting on behalf of another assembly of the Reformed Church in America, its members shall stand with, or in place of, the group present and join in the affirmation.
Will the representatives of \( N \) (congregation name or place of commissioned service) rise to affirm their acceptance of \( ( \text{name of the person} ) \) whom God has given them?

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,
do you receive in the name of the Lord,
this servant \( N \) \__________
to be your commissioned pastor?

We do.

Do you promise to
honor \( her/his \) authority, and
welcome \( her/his \) service
as a representative of Jesus Christ?

We do.

Do you promise \( her/him \)
such financial and personal support
that \( she/he \) may serve among you
with joy and not with grief?

We do.

The presiding officer shall continue.

In the name and by the authority of the Classis of \( N \) \__________,
I now declare that elder \( N \) \__________ is duly commissioned to service as \( ( \text{name of position} ) \) at \( ( \text{name of congregation or other area of service} ) \).

Thanks be to God.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION WITH THE LORD’S PRAYER

The following prayer may be used, intercessions may be selected from other sources, or the person assigned to pray may do so in her or his own words. The intercession shall conclude with the Lord’s Prayer.

Almighty and ever loving God,
you taught us to pray
for ourselves and for others,
and to give thanks for all of life.

May every grace of ministry rest on \( N \) \__________,
keep \( her/him \) strong and faithful,
may \( she/he \) herald the joy of your kingdom,
serving rather than being served.

Give your grace to \( ( \text{name of ministry/agency} ) \),
strengthen it in service,
preserve it in harmony,
use it to extend your reign of justice and peace.

Inspire your whole church
with your Spirit of power, unity, and peace.
Grant that all who trust you
may live together in love.
Lead all nations in the way of justice.
Direct those who govern,
that they be fair, maintain order,
support those in need, and defend the oppressed,
that the world may know true peace.
Give grace to all who proclaim the gospel
through Word and sacrament and deeds of mercy,
that by teaching and example
others may come to live for you.

Comfort and deliver, O Lord,
all who are in trouble…
sorrow…poverty…sickness…grief…
Heal them in body, mind, spirit, or circumstance,
working in them, by your grace,
wonders beyond their dreams and hopes,
through Jesus Christ our Savior,
who taught us to pray:

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.

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

The service may conclude with a hymn of thanksgiving.
The benediction will be given by the commissioned pastor.