RECEPTION INTO COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP

In the Reformed Church in America the Board of Elders alone has authority to receive persons into the communicant membership of the congregation. Such reception may be authorized only on the basis of a candidate’s confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a re-affirmation of such a confession, or the presentation of a satisfactory certificate of transfer from another Christian congregation. Part I of this form may be used by the elders in the exercise of this authority. Part II is for use before the congregation after the elders have granted the request for membership.

PART I: BEFORE THE ELDERs

At the meeting of the elders, the minister or presiding elder shall present each candidate for communicant membership by name. After the presentation the following or another suitable prayer shall be offered.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

O Lord, source of all light and life, you have called us out of the darkness in which we once walked that we might be a people of light. Illumine us now with your wisdom, that what we do at this time may be pleasing in your sight, that your Church may be strengthened and increased, and that your name may be glorified in the midst of your people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES

The presiding officer shall begin the examination saying:

N ____________________________

as baptized Christians, you are already members of Christ’s Church, heirs to the covenant of God of which your baptism is the sign and seal. Now you are before us to confess your faith in Christ and to confirm in your own person your willingness to live a Christian life as a communicant member of this congregation. Therefore, I ask you to answer sincerely these questions:

Do you accept the Gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ revealed in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only way to eternal life?
I do.

Do you acknowledge that you are a sinner, sinful by nature, but that by the grace of God alone your sins have been forgiven and your old nature put to death, so that you may be brought to newness of life and set apart as a member of the body of Christ?

I do.

Do you promise to pray for yourself and for others, seeking God’s guidance as together we seek to grow in knowledge and understanding of the faith?

I do.

Do you promise to show in your own person the joy of new life in Christ by active participation in the life of the Church and by faithful attendance to worship, service, and the offering of prayers and gifts, to the glory of God?

I do.

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the Church, obeying its doctrines and its teaching, and do you promise to walk in the spirit of Christian love with the congregation, seeking the things that make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

The elders may continue the examination, inquiring of individual candidates as to their knowledge and acceptance of the Christian faith and the sincerity of their decisions to become communicant members of the congregation.

Having reached their decision, the elders shall establish the date for public reception of the new communicant members. The meeting shall be concluded with the following or another suitable prayer offered by the presiding officer, with all present joining in the Lord’s Prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious and eternal God, we thank you for the bonds of love we share within your Church, and above all, for Jesus Christ, who has joined us into one living Body. Enable us, by the power of your Spirit, to walk together in unity of love and purpose; to help one another by word and example to live in faithful obedience to your will; and, by the justice and mercy we show toward one another, to give cause always for
your name to be praised; through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who has taught us to pray: or who has taught us when we pray to say:

**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 for ever. Amen.**

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**
- **hallowed be thy name,**
- **thy kingdom come,**
- **thy will be done,**
- **on earth as it is in heaven.**
**Give us this day our daily bread.**
**And forgive us our debts,**
- **as we forgive our debtors.**
**And lead us not into temptation,**
- **but deliver us from evil.**
**For thine is the kingdom,**
- **and the power, and the glory,**
**for ever. Amen.**

**PART II: BEFORE THE CONGREGATION**

*The public confession of faith and reception into the communicant membership of the congregation shall take place on the Lord’s Day, during the primary service of worship, after the Word of God has been proclaimed. The elder vice-president of the consistory, or another elder, shall present the candidates using the following form, or with similar words.*

**PRESENTATION**

The elders of the ________________________________ *(name of the church)*

have received into the communicant membership of the congregation ________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

*(the candidates’ full names shall be read in alphabetical order)*

who appeared before them, made a sincere confession of their Christian faith, and confirmed their willingness to live within the covenant community of God’s people in this church.

I ask them now to come and stand before us so that the whole congregation,
hearing them repeat and renew these pledges, may rejoice and welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

*The elder and the minister shall stand together, facing the candidates. When all have taken their places, the minister continues:*

**VOWS**

__(use Christian names, omit surnames)___

will you, before God and these your brothers and sisters in Christ, repeat and renew the promises you made when you were accepted into communicant membership in Christ’s Church?

**I will.**

Do you accept the Gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ revealed in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only way to eternal life?

**I do.**

Do you acknowledge that you are a sinner, sinful by nature, but that by the grace of God alone your sins have been forgiven and your old nature put to death, so that you may be brought to newness of life and set apart as a member of the body of Christ?

**I do.**

Do you promise to pray for yourself and for others, seeking God’s guidance as together we seek to grow in knowledge and understanding of the faith?

**I do.**

Do you promise to show in your own person the joy of new life in Christ by active participation in the life of the Church and by faithful attendance to worship, service, and the offering of prayers and gifts, to the glory of God?

**I do.**

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the Church, obeying its doctrines and its teaching, and do you promise to walk in the spirit of Christian love with the congregation, seeking the things that make for unity, purity, and peace?
I do.

When all have risen the minister shall address the congregation:

Do you, the members of this congregation, welcome these brothers and sisters into the community of faith as communicant members and pledge to them your love, your prayers, and your encouragement as they live the Christian life with us?

We do.

Let us confess our Christian faith using the Apostles’ Creed:

I. THE APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord,
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
and born of the Virgin Mary,
He 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,
and is seated on the right hand of the Father.
He will come again 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.

or

II. THE APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

N.B. A metrical version of the creed may be sung using RIL, hymn 609.

BLESSING

The congregation may be seated. The candidates shall kneel in turn and the minister and elder shall lay a hand on the head of each while the prayer is offered.

Defend, O Lord, this your servant N__________ (use Christian names, omit surnames) with your heavenly grace, that he she may continue yours forever, and daily increase in your Spirit more and more, until he she comes to your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER

After all the candidates have received the laying on of hands, the following or another suitable prayer shall be offered.

Let us pray.

Ever gracious God, sustain and nurture these your children. Make them a blessing to this congregation and to your whole Church. Through the power of the Holy Spirit enable them to serve their Lord faithfully as they live and learn and labor among us and with us.
Grant your grace also to this congregation. Enrich our life together and strengthen our witness to the world in Jesus’ name. Amen.

_The service of worship shall then continue according to the order appointed. It is most fitting that this include the celebration of the Lord’s Supper._