INTRODUCTION

Liturgy and Constitution

“The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice in the Reformed Church in America. Its Constitution consists of the Doctrinal Standards (which are the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism with its Compendium, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort), the Liturgy with the Directory for Worship, the Government of the Reformed Church in America, and the Disciplinary Procedures.”

—Preamble to the Book of Church Order

Doctrine, liturgy, and polity together form the Constitution of the Reformed Church in America. What we believe, how we worship, and how we govern our life together are what constitute us as a denomination.

From 1793 on, the distinctive three-fold constitution has continued to differentiate the Reformed church from other Calvinistic bodies in North America. What is remarkable about the three-fold shape is that, unlike other Calvinistic bodies, the Dutch Reformed church assumed that its Liturgy was not an option. By including it in its constitution, the church recognized that the actual liturgical text was something that helped form the basic character of the church.

Without it the church would be essentially different...[I]n the Reformed church worship has been made only secondarily a matter of Church Order. The primary definition of worship comes from the actual text of the Liturgy itself, and from its use as a living document.¹

Liturgy and Mission

The reference to the three-fold Constitution in the Preamble is set within the context of a statement of the mission of the church: “The purpose of the Reformed Church in America, together with all other churches of Christ, is to minister to the total life of all people by preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by all Christian good works. That purpose is achieved most effectively when good order and proper discipline are maintained by means of certain offices, governmental agencies, and theological and liturgical standards.” Offices, agencies, and theological and liturgical standards are not ends in themselves. They are to be maintained because they serve the mission of the church.

The liturgy, the living worship of the gathered community, is both a witness to and a participation in the redeeming work of God in Christ. From this
perspective, it is difficult to separate liturgy from mission. In the Word proclaimed, the washing with water, and in the sharing of bread and wine, God in Christ is at work, reconciling the world to himself. It is here, in the worshiping community, that the world most obviously and most readily discovers the gospel.²

**Form and Freedom**

Liturgical standards in the Reformed Church balance form and freedom. From the outset the Reformed Church has maintained a fixed liturgy, especially in the matter of the sacraments (*BCO*, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 8, b and c), but has also entrusted local consistories to guide the worship of their congregation. The order of worship for the Lord’s Day is to be in accordance with the *Liturgy*, or with the principles set forth in the *Directory for Worship*, “as the consistory may direct for the edification and profit of the congregation” (*BCO*, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 8, a).

An often-quoted paragraph from the Preface of the 1793 *Constitution* of the Reformed Church describes a style of worship with elements of both form and freedom:

Her mode of worship is expressed in the *Liturgy*, where forms of several prayers are given, without any idea, however, of restraining her members to any particular terms or fixed standards for prayer. Firmly believing, that the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the edification of Zion in every age, are promised and bestowed, the Reformed Dutch Church judges it sufficient to show in a few specimens the general tenor and manner in which public worship is performed, and leaves it to the piety and gifts of her ministers to conduct the ordinary solemnities of the sanctuary, in a manner they judge most acceptable to God, and most edifying to his people.

**Notes on the 2001 Revisions**

The *Order for Profession of Faith* is grounded in the sacrament of baptism, the sign and seal of our adoption into the body of Christ. The order also recognizes the various ways persons are received into a congregation as confessing members: persons seeking adult baptism, those baptized in infancy making initial profession of faith, those making reaffirmation of faith, and those transferring membership from other Christian churches. While baptism occurs only once in the life of a Christian, it is appropriate to publicly profess one’s faith at various times in one’s faith journey. This order also allows for that.
The revisions in the orders for ordination and installation ground the ministry of all Christians in baptism, use language that names the moral responsibility of office holders, and accent the unity of the offices in the church. The order for the ordination of elders and deacons, drawing both from Scripture and the historic expression of these offices in the Reformed tradition, seeks to express a fuller understanding of both offices.


PREPARATORY SERVICE I: BEFORE THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

It is recommended that the preparatory service be incorporated in the service of approach on the Sunday previous to the celebration of Communion, although it also may be held before each celebration of the Lord’s Supper itself.

EXHORTATION TO SELF-EXAMINATION

The minister addresses the congregation:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,
we propose to celebrate together, with the help of God,
the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper this/next Lord’s Day.
We come to the Table to commune with our Lord.
We come in awe and reverence, for the place where we stand is holy ground.
Here the Lord offers us the manna of life.

If we are to experience this celebration with our Lord
and be nourished by the Spirit,
let us examine ourselves first,
then eat the bread and drink from the cup.

The benefit is great,
if with penitent hearts and living faith
we receive the Lord’s Supper.
Let us acknowledge our sin before our merciful God,
with full intention of amending our lives.
Let us make restitution for all injuries and wrongs done to others.
Let us forgive those who have offended us, as we ourselves have been forgiven.
All children of the covenant,
be reconciled with one another and then come joyfully to the banquet.
If you are in need of help and counsel,
then go and open yourself to a wise, discreet,
and understanding brother or sister in the faith and confess your sin.
Receive spiritual counsel
so that you may experience assurance of God’s pardon,
and strengthening of your faith.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All shall join in making the personal and corporate acknowledgement of sin
and of their continuing need for God’s redemptive grace. A brief period of
silent prayer may be allowed.

PREPARATORY SERVICE I
Come, let us ask the mercy of God.

Almighty God,
we have sinned against you and one another,
in thought, word, and deed,
in what we have done and in what we have left undone.
Therefore, we pray in silence before you.

Silence

At the conclusion of the silence, all may say or sing:

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

And

In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The minister continues:

Our gracious God forgives you your sin,
strengthens you by the Spirit,
and will keep you in life eternal,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:
everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!
All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ,
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Or

Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?
Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.
As a mother comforts her child, 
so I will comfort you, says the Lord. 

_Isaiah 49:15; 66:13_

Or

But God, who is rich in mercy,  
out of the great love with which he loved us  
even when we were dead through our trespasses,  
made us alive together with Christ.  
For by grace you have been saved through faith,  
and this is not your own doing;  
it is the gift of God—  
not the result of works,  
so that no one may boast.  

_Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9_

Or

For God so loved the world  
that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him  
may not perish but may have eternal life.  
Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world  
to condemn the world,  
but in order that the world  
might be saved through him.  

_John 3:16-17_
PREPARATORY SERVICE II: BEFORE THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

It is recommended that the preparatory service be incorporated in the service of approach on the Sunday previous to the celebration of Communion, although it also may be held before each celebration of the Lord’s Supper itself.

EXHORTATION TO SELF-EXAMINATION

The minister addresses the congregation:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,
we propose to celebrate together,
with the gracious help of God,
the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper this/next Lord’s Day.
Our conscience, instructed by God’s law,
rightly declares us unworthy of this gift.
We find we have neither loved the Lord our God
with all our heart, soul, and mind,
nor have we loved our neighbor as ourselves.
To examine our lives is to confirm that we deserve exclusion
from this royal banquet, and, indeed,
from God’s presence forevermore.

Yet this is God’s feast of love,
and it was in love that Christ gave himself for us.
When we were unworthy,
Christ made us worthy.
When we should have justly died
as punishment for our sins,
Christ freely paid our penalty, dying in our place.
Christ has become our complete righteousness.

Therefore, our self-examination must not end in despair.
We are called to trust God’s work on our behalf
and to receive the gift of forgiveness offered us in Christ Jesus.
Our reconciliation to God is found in trusting this good news—that before we chose God, God chose us.
We are what God has made us,
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Partaking at the Lord’s Table is not an act of virtue.
This table is prepared for those who humbly trust Christ alone.
and find in his death, resurrection, and ascension their only peace. Though they often fail in their efforts, those who thus approach this table will desire to please God, conforming their lives to God’s purposes. Rest fully assured that when God finds such contrite trust and godly intention, God will forgive all our sins and make us worthy partakers of this heavenly kingdom.

As we examine ourselves, let us confess our sins.

Let us pray.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All shall join in making the personal and corporate acknowledgement of sin and of their continuing need for God’s redemptive grace. A brief period for silent prayer may follow the corporate confession.

Come, let us ask the mercy of God.

Almighty God, we have sinned against you and one another, in thought, word, and deed, in what we have done and in what we have left undone. Therefore, we pray in silence before you.

Silence

All may say or sing:

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

And

In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The minister continues:
Our gracious God forgives you your sin, 
strengthens you by the Holy Spirit, 
and will keep you in life eternal, 
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So if anyone is in Christ, 
there is a new creation: 
everything old has passed away; 
see, everything has become new! 
All this is from God, 
who reconciled us to himself through Christ, 
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Or

Can a woman forget her nursing child, 
or show no compassion for the child of her womb? 
Even these may forget, 
yet I will not forget you. 
As a mother comforts her child, 
so I will comfort you, says the Lord.

Isaiah 49:15; 66:13

Or

But God, who is rich in mercy, 
out of the great love with which he loved us 
even when we were dead through our trespasses, 
made us alive together with Christ. 
For by grace you have been saved through faith, 
and this is not your own doing; 
it is the gift of God—
not the result of works, 
so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9

Or

For God so loved the world 
that he gave his only Son, 
so that everyone who believes in him 
may not perish but may have eternal life. 
Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world
to condemn the world,
but in order that the world
might be saved through him.

*John 3:16-17*
PREPARATORY EXHORTATION
BEFORE THE CELEBRATION
OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

A preparatory service may be held before each celebration of the Lord’s Supper, in connection with the Communion service itself, or on the previous Sunday. It may be observed in the worship service just prior to the Prayer of Confession, replacing the normal invitation to pray. The following exhortation may be used to meet the requirement.

EXHORTATION TO SELF-EXAMINATION

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we propose to celebrate together, with the gracious help of God, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper this next Lord’s Day. That we may celebrate this Sacrament to our comfort, it is necessary that we rightly examine ourselves. Let us all, therefore, consider our sins, asking ourselves whether we believe this faithful promise of God: that all our sins are forgiven us only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, even as perfectly as if we had fulfilled all righteousness. Let us also ask ourselves whether we make it our aim to show true thankfulness to God in our whole life, to walk uprightly before God, and to live in love and peace with our neighbor.

All those who are of this mind God will certainly receive in mercy and count them worthy partakers of the Supper of our Lord. On the contrary, according to the command of Christ and the Apostle Paul, we admonish all those who are continuing in unrepented sin to keep themselves from the Lord’s Table.

This admonition is not intended, dearly beloved, to distress the contrite hearts of God’s people, as if none might come to our Lord’s Table but those who are without sin. For we do not come to this Supper to testify that we are righteous in ourselves, but rather that we are conscious of our sinfulness and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

Therefore, despite any feeling that we do not have perfect faith, and that we do not serve God with such zeal as we ought, but have daily to strive with the weakness of our faith and the selfishness of our desires; yet since we are, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, sorry for these weaknesses and earnest in our desire to fight against our unbelief and to live according to all the commandments of God, therefore we rest assured that no sin or infirmity which still remains against our will in us can
hinder us from being received by God in mercy and from being made worthy partakers of our Lord.

That we may now so examine ourselves before almighty God, let us confess our sins. Let us pray.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

_All shall join in making the personal and corporate acknowledge of sin and of their continuing need for God’s redemptive grace. A brief period for silent prayers may follow the corporation confession._
THE PREPARATORY SERVICE

A preparatory service should be held before each celebration of the Lord’s Supper. It may be held on the previous Sunday or on a weekday or in connection with the Communion service itself. When used in the order of worship it may be placed at the beginning of the service before the Prayer of Confession and replacing the usual introduction to it, as indicated in this Order, or it may follow the Doxology and lead into the General Prayers, in the opening petitions of which the minister will ask God for pardon and grace.

Votum, Sentences, and Salutation

Hymn

Exhortation of Self-Examination

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is known to you that on __________ we propose to celebrate together, with the gracious help of God, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

That we may celebrate this Sacrament to our comfort, it is necessary that we rightly examine ourselves.

Let everyone, therefore, first consider his sins, asking himself whether he believes this faithful promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is freely given to him as his own, even as perfectly as if he had fulfilled all righteousness. Let everyone ask himself whether he purposes henceforward to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life, to walk uprightly before him, and to live in love and peace with his neighbor.

All those who are of this mind, God will certainly receive in mercy and count them worthy partakers of the Table of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, according to the command of Christ and the Apostle Paul, we admonish all those who are continuing in unrepented sin to keep themselves from the Lord’s Table.

This admonition is not intended, dearly beloved, to distress the contrite hearts of God’s people, as if none might come to his Table but those who are without sin. For we do not come to this Supper to testify that we are
righteous in ourselves, but rather that we are conscious of our sinfulness and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

Therefore, notwithstanding we feel that we have not perfect faith, and that we do not serve God with such zeal as we ought, but have daily to strive with the weakness of our faith and the evil lusts of our flesh; yet, since we are, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, sorry for these weaknesses and earnestly desirous to fight against our unbelief and to live according to all the commandments of God, therefore we rest assured that no sin or infirmity which still remains against our will in us can hinder us from being received of God in mercy and from being made worthy partakers of his heavenly food.

That we may so now examine ourselves before almighty God, let us confess our sins to him.

**Prayer of Confession**

*Here the minister shall lead the people in a prayer of confession chosen from those provided in the Treasury of Prayers or in one suitably expressed in his own words. After the Prayer of Confession the service continues as in the first Order of Worship.*

Let us pray.
CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR THE LORD’S DAY

The service of worship ordinarily begins with the Votum, Sentences, and Salutation. Or it may begin with the Hymn, especially if it is a processional, followed by the Votum, Sentences, and Salutation.

THE APPROACH TO GOD

VOTUM

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
Amen.  
Psalm 124:8

SENTENCES

The following, or other appropriate portions of Scripture, may be used.

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
Psalm 95:6-7

And/or

Psalm 33:1-5  Psalm 100
Zechariah 8:7-8  Psalm 43:3-4
Exodus 15:2  John 4:24
Psalm 96:1-3  Isaiah 55:1, 6-7

SALUTATION

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Or

Galatians 1:3-5  2 Peter 1:2
Jude 2  1 Timothy 1:2
2 John 3  Revelation 1:4-5
Titus 1:4

LORD’S DAY / 1
HYMN

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

The minister may introduce the prayer with the following, or another suitable call to confession.

Let us confess our sins to almighty God. Let us pray.

All shall join in one of the following prayers or another appropriate confession.

Have mercy upon us, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercies,
blot out our transgressions.
Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity,
and cleanse us from our sin.
For we know our transgressions,
and our sin is ever before us.
Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within us.
Cast us not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from us.
Restore to us the joy of your salvation,
and uphold us with a willing spirit.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from Psalm 51

Or

Most holy and merciful Father,
we acknowledge and confess before you our sinful nature,
prone to evil and slow to do good;
and all our shortcomings and offenses.
You alone know how often we have sinned:
in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts,
in forgetting your love.
But, O Lord, have mercy on us,
who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased you.
Teach us to hate our errors;
cleanse us from our secret faults;
and forgive our sins;
for the sake of your dear Son.
And, O most holy and loving God, 
help us to live in your light and walk in your ways, 
according to the commandments of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

A brief period for silent prayers may be allowed. The following or another suitable response may then be said or sung.

Lord, have mercy upon us. 
Christ, have mercy upon us. 
Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One of the following scriptural assurances or one drawn from other portions of Scripture may be used to convey an assurance of God’s promise freely to pardon all who come to him in repentance and faith.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, 
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. 
He does not deal with us according to our sins, 
nor repay us according to our iniquities. 
For as the heavens are high above the earth, 
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; 
as far as the east is from the west, 
so far he removes our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:8, 10-12

Or

With everlasting love I will have compassion on you, 
says the Lord, your Redeemer. 
I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, 
and I will not remember your sins. 
Return to me, for I have redeemed you.

Isaiah 54:8; 43:25; 44:22

Or

Can a woman forget her nursing child, 
or show no compassion for the child of her womb? 
As a mother comforts her child, 
so will I comfort you, says the Lord.

Isaiah 49:15; 66:13
For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16-17

Psalm 130:3-4, 7 Isaiah 44:21-22
John 8:34-36 Psalm 145:18-19
Luke 1:68, 77-78 Colossians 1:11-14

At the conclusion of the scriptural assurance, the minister shall add:

Believe this Gospel and go forth to live in peace. Amen.

THE LAW OF GOD

The Law may be read or sung, or the service may proceed to the reading of the Summary.

Then God spoke all these words:
I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;
you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.
Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Exodus 20:1-17

And/or

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40

or as it is recorded in Mark 12:29-31.
PSALTER AND GLORIA PATRI

A selection from the Psalms and the Gloria Patri or another appropriate hymn may be sung to express gratitude to God.

THE WORD OF GOD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

This prayer or another petition may be offered.

Guide us, O Lord,
by your Word and Holy Spirit,
that in your light we may see light,
in your truth find freedom,
and in your will discover peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LESSONS

There will ordinarily be two or three lessons, one from the Old Testament, one from the portion of the New Testament other than the Gospels, and one from the Gospels. The Psalm for the day may be said or sung following the first lesson. A hymn or anthem reflecting the Scriptures of the day may be sung between the lessons. The lessons may be announced as follows:

The Word of the Lord from __________________________.

After the reading of the lesson there may be the response:

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Gospel may be announced as follows:

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to ___________________.

The following may be used as a response to the Gospel:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.
SERMON

The minister shall deliver a sermon proclaiming the Scripture of the day.

PRAYER FOR BLESSING

Almighty God,
grant that the words we have heard this day
may, through your grace, be so grafted within our hearts
that they may bring forth in us the fruits of the Spirit,
to the honor and praise of your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The minister shall move to the table.

When worship includes only the grace of the Word in Proclamation, then the
Creed, Offering, Doxology, Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession,
Hymn, and Benediction may be understood as the congregation’s Response
to God.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The minister shall call the people to join in an affirmation of the Christian
faith.

Let us confess our Christian faith using the Nicene [or Apostles’] Creed:

When all have risen, the minister shall say:

Let us say what we believe.

A THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father; 
through him all things were made. 
For us and for our salvation 
he came down from heaven, 
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary 
and became truly human. 
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; 
he suffered death and was buried. 
On the third day he rose again 
in accordance with the Scriptures; 
he ascended into heaven 
and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, 
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, 
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], 
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, 
who has spoken through the prophets. 
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. 
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. 
We look for the resurrection of the dead, 
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Or

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, 
the Father almighty, 
maker of heaven and earth, 
and of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, 
the only-begotten Son of God, 
begotten of his Father before all worlds, 
God of God, Light of Light, 
very God of very God, 
begotten, not made, 
being of one substance with the Father; 
by whom all things were made; 
who for us and for our salvation 
came down from heaven, 
and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried;
and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;
and he shall come again, with glory,
to judge both the quick and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life,
who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped
and glorified;
who spake by the Prophets,
and we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church;
we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;
and we look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Or

A 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 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.

PEACE

The minister may introduce the Peace with these, or other appropriate words of Scripture:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.

Colossians 3:15

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

The congregation may then exchange the Peace using the same greeting and response or through other appropriate words and actions.

OFFERING
As the offerings are gathered there may be an anthem or other musical offering. The elements for the Lord’s Supper may be brought forward with the offering.

DOXOLOGY

This hymn, or another ascription of praise, may be used as the offerings are brought forward.

MEANING OF THE SACRAMENT

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Supper which we are about to celebrate is a feast of remembrance, of communion, and of hope.

We come in remembrance that our Lord Jesus Christ was sent of the Father into the world to assume our flesh and blood and to fulfill for us all obedience to the divine law, even to the bitter and shameful death of the cross. By his death, resurrection, and ascension he established a new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken by him.

We come to have communion with this same Christ who has promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world. In the breaking of the bread he makes himself known to us as the true heavenly Bread that strengthens us unto life eternal. In the cup of blessing he comes to us as the Vine in whom we must abide if we are to bear fruit.

We come in hope, believing that this bread and this cup are a pledge and foretaste of the feast of love of which we shall partake when his kingdom has fully come, when with unveiled face we shall behold him, made like unto him in his glory.

Since by his death, resurrection, and ascension Christ has obtained for us the life-giving Spirit who unites us all in one body, so are we to receive this Supper in true love, mindful of the communion of saints.
INVITATION

The minister, in the name of Christ, shall extend an invitation to all present concerning participation in the Sacrament.

All baptized Christians present who are admitted to the Lord’s Supper are to be invited to participate.

COMMUNION PRAYER

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Holy and right it is, and our joyful duty
to give thanks to you at all times and in all places,
O Lord our Creator,
almighty and everlasting God!
You created heaven with all its hosts and the earth with all its plenty.
You have given us life and being,
and preserve us by your providence.
But you have shown us the fullness of your love
in sending into the world your Son, Jesus Christ,
the eternal Word, made flesh for us and for our salvation.
For the precious gift of this mighty Savior who has reconciled us to you
we praise and bless you, O God.
With your whole Church on earth and with all the company of heaven
we worship and adore your glorious name.

Here all shall say or sing:

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

Silence
Most righteous God,  
we remember in this Supper  
the perfect sacrifice offered once on the cross by our Lord Jesus Christ  
for the sin of the whole world.

In the joy of his resurrection and in expectation of his coming again,  
we offer ourselves to you as holy and living sacrifices.

Together we proclaim the mystery of the faith:

Here all shall say or sing:

Christ has died!  
Christ is risen!  
Christ will come again!

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.

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!

COMMUNION

The minister shall declare the Words of Institution.

In full view of the people the minister shall take the bread and say:

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.

THE RESPONSE TO GOD

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION

Brothers and sisters,
since the Lord has now fed us at his Table,
let us praise God’s holy name with heartfelt thanksgiving!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children,

so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him,

who did not spare his own Son,

but gave him up for us all,

and will also give us all things with him.

Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord,

from this time forth for evermore. Amen.

*From Psalm 103, with additions*

**INTERCESSION**

The following prayers may be used. Intercessions may be selected from other sources or may be in the minister’s own words. The intercessions shall conclude with the Lord’s Prayer.

Let us pray.

We praise and thank you, O Lord,

that you have fed us at your Table.

Grateful for your gifts and mindful of the communion of your saints,

we offer to you our prayers for all people.

God of compassion,

we remember before you

the poor and the afflicted,

the sick and the dying,

prisoners and all who are lonely,

the victims of war, injustice, and inhumanity,

and all others who suffer from whatever their sufferings may be called.

*Silence*

O Lord of Providence,

who holds the destiny of the nations in your hand,

we pray for our country.

Inspire the hearts and minds of our leaders

that they, together with all our nation,

may first seek your kingdom and righteousness

so that order, liberty, and peace may dwell with your people.

*Silence*

O God the Creator,

we pray for all nations and peoples.
Take away the mistrust and lack of understanding that divide your creatures; increase in us the recognition that we are all your children.

Silence

O Savior God,
look upon your church in its struggle upon the earth.
Have mercy on its weakness,
bring to an end its unhappy divisions,
and scatter its fears.
Look also upon the ministry of your church.
Increase its courage, strengthen its faith,
and inspire its witness to all people,
even to the ends of the earth.

Silence

Author of grace and God of love,
send your Holy Spirit’s blessing to your children here present.
Keep our hearts and thoughts in Jesus Christ, your Son, our only Savior, who has 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.

Or

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,
forever. Amen.

HYMN

BENEDICTION

Facing the congregation, the minister shall give the blessing:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.
Amen!

2 Corinthians 13:13

Or

2 Thessalonians 3:16  Psalm 67:1-2
Romans 15:5-6  Hebrews 13:20-21
THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

The service ordinarily begins with the Votum and Sentences, followed by the singing of praise. Or it may begin with the Hymn, especially if it is a processional, which then may be followed by the Votum and Sentences. The congregation being assembled, the minister shall solemnly call the people to worship saying:

Let us worship God.

Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. AMEN.

Or,

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Sentences

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Or,

O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill and to thy dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy.

Or,

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Other sentences, especially those appropriate to the Church Year, may be used.

Salutation

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Hymn of Praise**

*The Hymn may be followed by a prayer of supplication for grace to worship aright, or of adoration, or the minister may proceed directly to the Prayer of Confession.*

**Prayer of Confession**

*The minister may introduce the prayer by saying:*

Dearly Beloved, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let us pray:

*Or,*

Let us confess our sins to almighty God:

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin. For we acknowledge our transgressions: and our sin is ever before us. Create in us a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us the joy of thy salvation; and uphold us with thy free spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Or,*

Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we desire or deserve; pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen.
Or,

Almighty and most merciful father, we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O Most Merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

The following or other suitable response may then be said or sung:

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Words of Assurance

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. Believe this Gospel, and go forth to live in peace.

Or,

With everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer. I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. Believe this Gospel and go forth to live in peace.

Law of God and/or Summary

As in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Law follows the forgiveness of sin. The Law and/or Summary may be read here or before the Prayer of Confession.

God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, who brought
you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

Summary of the Law

Hear also what our Lord Jesus Christ says: You shall love the Lord your
God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

**Psalter and Gloria Patri**

_To express thanksgiving for the promised forgiveness, the Psalter and Gloria Patri or an appropriate hymn may be used._

**A Prayer for Illumination**

_This prayer may be said before the reading of Scripture or before the sermon._

**Lessons**

_There will ordinarily be two lessons, the first from the Old Testament, or from a portion of the New Testament other than the Gospels. The second lesson may most fittingly be read from one of the Gospels. Before reading the lesson, let the minister say:_

The lesson from the Old Testament (or New Testament; or Epistle; or Gospel) is written in the book of _____, the ___ chapter, beginning to read at the ___ verse.

_After the reading of the second lesson the minister may say:_

Thanks be to God for his holy Word, and to his name be glory and praise. Amen.

**Confession of Faith**

_The Confession of Faith may be made here or after the Prayer for Blessing on the Word. The minister may introduce the Confession of Faith by saying:_

Let us make confession of our Christian faith, in the words of the Nicene (or Apostles’) Creed:

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds; God of God; light of light; very God of very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven; and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Ghost; the Lord and giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And we believe in one holy Catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Or,

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.

Hymn

Sermon

Prayer for Blessing on the Word

Offering
The movement of service now goes from the pulpit to the table, where the minister will receive the offering of the people, after the singing of the Doxology

Or another appropriate response may be used. After the response the congregation may be seated and the ushers return to their places.

General Prayers

While at the table, the minister shall lead in prayers of thanksgiving and of intercession, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer. The following prayers may be used.

Holy and right it is and our joyful duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For he has redeemed us from death and destruction, and on this day did rise gloriously from the dead, and has given us the blessed hope of everlasting life.

O God, in glory exalted, and in mercy ever blessed, we magnify thee, we praise thee, we give thanks to thee for all thy bountiful providence, for all the blessings of this present life, and for the hope of a better life yet to come. Let the memory of thy goodness fill our hearts with joy and thankfulness; and let no unworthiness of ours provoke thee to withhold from us any needed good, seeing that all our blessings come not by our desert, but only through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God, who has taught us to make intercession for all men, we pray not only for ourselves here present, but for all thy children of every nation, tribe, and tongue. We pray for all who are without the blessed light of the Gospel. May it please thee to speed thy Church in its mission to make thy truth known to all men, thy saving health to all nations. Give strength to all who are engaged in the ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing.

We pray for thy Church of every name and every rite, the whole family of thy people who worship thee in spirit and in truth. May all thy ministers and people be found faithful in life and doctrine, and by them may all who have wandered and gone astray be brought safely back to the fold.

Direct and govern, we pray thee, all who are engaged in the tasks of government. We pray for thy blessing on thy servant the President of the United...
States, and all others to whom the people have entrusted power and authority. Let thy fatherly favor so preserve them that true religion may be preserved in our land and the people abide in righteousness and peace.

Finally, we offer to thee in the silence of our hearts our petitions for those near and dear to us, and for all who are in need of our prayers. (Silence) Be with them and help them, we pray thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, dominion, and power, world without end. And now as our Savior has taught us, we humbly pray:

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 forever. Amen.

Hymn

Benediction

Go in peace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Or,

The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

Or,

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

*The Benediction is a part of the ministry of the Word and should be said from the chancel or pulpit. It should be chosen from Apostolic or other Scriptural blessings.*

*An anthem or other suitable music may be sung after the Psalter and Gloria, before the sermon, or during the offering.*

8 THE ORDER OF WORSHIP, 1968
AN ALTERNATE ORDER OF WORSHIP

The congregation being assembled, the minister shall solemnly call the people to worship, saying:

Let us worship God.

Hymn

This opening hymn may be sung as a processional, the people rising and joining in the singing as the choir enters the church. The people will remain standing during the Votum, Sentences, and Salutation.

Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen.

Or,

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sentences

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Or,

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all peoples!

Salutation

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or,

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in your
hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*Here the minister may lead the people in a prayer of adoration or of supplication for grace to worship aright. He may choose one from those provided in the Liturgy or use one suitably expressed in his own words, or he may proceed directly to the reading of the Law and/or Summary.*

**Law and/or Summary**

*The Law and/or Summary may be read here or before the Prayer of Confession.*

God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

2 ALTERNATE ORDER OF WORSHIP, 1968
You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

Summary

Hear also what our Lord Jesus Christ says: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

Kyrie Eleison

The following or other suitable response may be said or sung.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Prayer of Confession

The minister may introduce the prayer by saying:

Dearly beloved, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let us pray:

Or,

Let us confess our sins to almighty God:

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin. For we
acknowledge our transgressions; and our sin is ever before us. Create in us a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us the joy of thy salvation; and uphold us with thy free spirit. Amen.

**Words of Assurance**

The minister may say the following words of assurance or suitable Scriptural sentences. Suggested passages are Isaiah 43:25; 54:8; 42:22; Matthew 11:28; John 3:16.

Almighty God, who does freely pardon all who repent and turn to him, now fulfill in every contrite heart the promise of redeeming grace; remitting all our sins, and cleansing us from an evil conscience; through the perfect sacrifice of Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Psalter and Gloria Patri**

**Reading of the Holy Scriptures**

*There will ordinarily be two lessons, the first from the Old Testament, or from a portion of the New Testament other than the Gospels. The second lesson may most fittingly be read from one of the Gospels.*

**Confession of Faith**

*The Confession of Faith may be made here or after the Prayer for Blessing on the Word. The minister may introduce the Confession of Faith by saying:*

Let us make confession of our Christian faith, in the words of the Nicene (or Apostles’) Creed.

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds; God of God; light of light; very God of very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven; and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Ghost; the Lord and giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And we believe in one holy Catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Or,

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.

General Prayers

_The minister shall then lead the congregation in prayers of thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession; or these prayers may be offered after the sermon. In either case, the prayers should be concluded with the Lord’s Prayer, the people uniting with the minister._

Offering

_The offering may be presented here or at the close of the sermon. A brief prayer of dedication may be offered when the gifts are brought to the table._

Hymn

Sermon
Prayer for Blessing on the Word

*The prayer following the sermon may well voice thanksgiving for all the means of grace, especially for the blessings of Word and Sacrament and fellowship with Christ in the communion of saints.*

Hymn

Benediction

*The Benediction is part of the ministry of the Word and should be said from the chancel or pulpit. It should be chosen from Apostolic or other Scriptural blessings.*

*An anthem or other suitable music may be sung after the Psalter and Gloria, before the sermon, or during the offering.*
THE ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPER

The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Article 9, Section 5) states that “the order for the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper must be read.” The congregation may use this revised Order or either of the two Orders from Liturgy and Psalms, 1906, given on p. 75 and p. 85.

In this revision, the Order of Worship will be followed through the Offering and Doxology. If the Exhortation from the Preparatory Service has not been read, it should be used before the Prayer of Confession. After the Offering, the service proceeds as follows. The minister may read the Meaning of the Sacrament as given under I or II.

Meaning of the Sacrament

I

Beloved in the Lord, as we come to the holy Supper of our Lord and Savior, it is fitting that we consider to what end our Lord has instituted it.

“This do,” he said, “in remembrance of me.”

We are, therefore, to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the promises made in the Old Testament, was sent of the Father into the world; that he assumed our flesh and blood; that he bore for us the wrath of God, under which we should have perished everlastingly; that he fulfilled for us all obedience to the divine law; that he, although innocent, was condemned to death so that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God; that he took upon himself the curse due to us so that he might fill us with his blessings; that he humbled himself unto death, even the bitter and shameful death of the cross, when he cried out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” so that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken of him; and finally, that he confirmed with the shedding of his blood the new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation, when he said, “It is finished.”

“This is my body, broken for you,” he said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood.”

We are, therefore, to believe these promises which Jesus Christ, who is the truth, has himself given us. It is his will that we be partakers of his body and
blood and share in all his benefits, so that he may dwell in us and we in him. We may not doubt that he will perform in our hearts and lives all that these outward signs signify and that he who is the true heavenly bread will nourish and strengthen us to life eternal. For in this Supper we share in the infinite goodness of our Savior and are made partakers of all his blessings, of life eternal, righteousness, and glory.

But in this Supper of remembrance and communion we must also lift up our hearts in hope. For we do this, as he commanded, till he come. As we eat this break and drink this cup, he gives us a pledge and foretaste of that feast of love of which we shall partake when his kingdom has fully come. Under the veil of earthly things we now have communion with him. But with unveiled face we shall behold him, rejoicing in his glory, made like unto him in his glory. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

And as by his death, resurrection, and ascension he has obtained for us the life-giving Spirit who, dwelling in him as the Head and in us as his members, unites us all in one body, so are we to receive this Supper in brotherly love, mindful of the communion of saints. As the holy Apostle says, “We being many are one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” Hereto assist us the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through his Holy Spirit. Amen.

Or,

II

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Supper which we are about to celebrate is a feast of remembrance, of communion, and of hope.

We come in remembrance that our Lord Jesus Christ was sent of the Father into the world to assume our flesh and blood and to fulfill for us all obedience to the divine law, even to the bitter and shameful death of the cross. By his death, resurrection, and ascension he established a new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken by him.

We come to have communion with this same Christ who has promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world. In the breaking of the bread he makes himself known to us as the true heavenly Bread that strengthens us unto life eternal. In the cup of blessing he comes to us as the Vine in
whom we must abide if we are to bear fruit.

We come in hope, believing that this bread and this cup are a pledge and foretaste of the feast of love of which we shall partake when his kingdom has fully come, when with unveiled face we shall behold him, made like unto him in this glory.

Since by his death, resurrection, and ascension he has obtained for us the life-giving Spirit who unites us all in one body, so are we to receive this Supper in true brotherly love, mindful of the communion of saints.

Come, for all things are now ready.

**Hymn**

*During the singing of this hymn, the minister and consistory shall take their places at the Lord’s Table, if they have not already done so. Before the singing of this hymn, an invitation to partake of the Sacrament may be extended to communicants present who are not members of this particular congregation.*

**Communion Prayer**

*Having taken his place at the Lord’s Table, the minister shall say:*

Let us lift up our hearts unto the Lord!

Holy and right it is and our joyful duty to give thanks to thee at all times and in all places, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God. Thou didst create the heaven with all its hosts and the earth with all its plenty. Thou hast given us life and being and dost preserve us by thy providence. But thou hast shown us the fullness of thy love in sending into the world thy eternal Word, even Jesus Christ our Lord, who became man for us men and for our salvation. For the precious gift of this mighty Savior who has reconciled us to thee we praise and bless thee, O God.

Therefore with thy whole Church on earth and with all the company of heaven we worship and adore thy glorious name.

*Here may be said or sung:*

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

_A short period of silence._

Holy and righteous Father, as we commemorate in this Supper that perfect sacrifice once offered on the cross by our Lord Jesus Christ for the sin of the whole world, in the joy of his resurrection and in expectation of his coming again, we offer to thee ourselves as holy and living sacrifices. Send thy Holy Spirit upon us, we pray thee, that the bread which we break may be to us the communion of the body of Christ and the cup which we bless the communion of his blood. Grant that being joined together in him we may attain to the unity of the faith and grow up in all things into him who is the Head, even Christ our Lord.

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 thy whole Church may soon be gathered from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

And now, as our savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say:

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 forever. Amen.

*If no confession of faith has been made previously in the Order, it shall be made here.*

**Communion**

_The minister shall then say:_

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread (here he shall take the bread in his hand); and when he had given thanks, he broke it (here the minister shall break the bread) and gave it to them, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.”
After the same manner also, he took the cup (*here the minister shall take the cup in his hand*), when they had supped, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.”

*In distributing the bread, the minister shall say:*

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

*And in giving the cup:*

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

**Communion Thanksgiving**

*After the communion, the minister shall proceed as follows, the congregation reading its part responsively or in unison with the minister:*

Beloved in the Lord, since the Lord has now fed our souls at his Table, let us therefore jointly praise his holy name with thanksgiving and everyone say with mouth and heart:

Bless the Lord, O my soul;
   And all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
   And forget not all his benefits,
Who forgives all your iniquity,
   Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from the Pit,
   Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,
   Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
   Nor requite us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
   As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father pities his children,
   So the Lord pities those who fear him.
Who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, and will also give us all things with him.

Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord from this time forth forevemore. Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession**

*The following prayers may be used, or the minister may choose from the Intercessory Prayers in the Treasury of Prayers, or suitably express the intercessions in his own words.*

Let us pray.

Thanksgiving and praise be to thee, O Lord, that thou hast fed us at thy Table. Grateful for thy gifts and mindful of the communion of thy saints, we offer to thee our prayers for all men everywhere.

God of all pity, we remember before thee the poor and the afflicted, the sick and the dying, the prisoners and the lonely, the victims of war, injustice, and inhumanity, and all who suffer from whatever their suffering may be called.

*Silence.*

Sovereign Master of the world, who dost hold the destiny of the nations in thy hand, we pray for our country. Assist those who exercise authority among us in the discharge of their duty. Grant peace to the world so that all men may live and serve thee in righteousness and liberty.

*Silence.*

Look upon thy Church in its struggle on the earth. Have mercy on its weakness, bring to an end its unhappy divisions, scatter its fears, increase its courage, strengthen its faith, and inspire its witness to the people even to the ends of the earth.

*Silence.*

Author of grace, our Father, send thy blessing on thy children here present; keep their hearts and their thoughts in Jesus Christ thy Son, our only Savior.
To him be glory with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore. Amen.

**Hymn**

*During the singing the table may be covered.*

**Benediction**

*The following or another suitable form may be used.*

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your minds and hearts in the knowledge and love of God and of Jesus Christ his Son, our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be and abide with you, now and always. Amen.

When the Lord’s Supper is celebrated in the sickroom, the reading of Meaning of the Sacrament (II), that part of the Prayer beginning with *Holy and righteous Father*, the Words of Institution, and the Communion Thanksgiving will be a satisfactory order, by direction of the General Synod.
ORDER FOR A SECOND TABLE

The following Order is to be used when the elements are taken from the church to the sick and the shut-in of the congregation. In such cases, at least one elder should be present with the minister.

It may be used also at a service in the afternoon or evening of the day when the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper has already been celebrated in the morning, and an opportunity is to be extended those who could not be present to partake. In this event, this Order shall be read after the sermon.

In no event is this Order to be used except in connection with the full Order for the celebration of the Sacrament. Nor is this Order to be considered as in any way a substitute for that service.

Sentences

Having taken his place at the Lord’s Table, the minister shall say:

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Exhortation

Dearly beloved in the Lord, that you may now receive the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to your comfort, let every one of you examine himself in heart and conscience, whether he believes God’s faithful promise that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and whether he purposes henceforth to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life by walking uprightly before him and by living in love and peace with his neighbor. For all those who are thus minded, God will certainly receive in mercy and count them worthy partakers of the Table of his Son.

You are also to consider that, in instituting this holy Supper, our Lord Jesus Christ gave us a sure remembrance and pledge of his hearty love and faithfulness toward us. Doubt not that Christ himself will as certainly feed and nourish our souls unto everlasting life with his crucified body and shed blood at this bread is broken, this cup given, and we eat and drink in remembrance of him.
That we may obtain this grace, let us humbly bow before God and with true faith implore his favor.

Prayer

Let us pray.

O merciful God and Father, we pray thee that thou wilt be pleased in this Supper, in which we celebrate the glorious remembrance of the bitter death of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, to work in our hearts through thy Holy Spirit, that we may daily give ourselves up to him with true confidence, so that we may be fed and comforted with his true body and blood, yea, with him, true God and Man, that only heavenly bread.

Grant that we may no longer live in our sins, but he in us, and we in him, that we may be partakers of the new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation. Strengthen us by this holy Supper that we may not doubt that thou wilt forever be our gracious Father, never more imputing our sins to us, and providing us, as thy beloved children, with all things necessary both for body and soul.

Grant us also thy grace that we may take upon us our cross cheerfully, deny ourselves, confess our Savior, and in all tribulations with uplifted hearts expect our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, where he will make our mortal bodies like unto his most glorious body and take us to himself in eternity; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us to say when we pray:

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 forever. Amen.

Communion

The minister shall then say:

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread (here he shall take the bread in his hand); and when he had blessed it, he broke it (here the minister shall break the bread) and gave it to them, saying,
“Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.”

After the same manner also, he took the cup (here the minister shall take the cup in his hand), when they had supped, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

In distributing the bread, the minister shall say:

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

And in giving the cup:

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

When all have partaken, the minister may say:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Prayer

Let us pray.

O almighty, merciful God and Father, we render thee most humble and hearty thanks that thou hast of thin infinite mercy given us thine only begotten Son for a mediator and a sacrifice for our sins, and to be our meat and drink unto life eternal. Grant, we pray thee, O faithful God and Father, that, through the working of thy Holy Spirit, this commemoration of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ may tend to the daily increase of our faith and of our saving fellowship with him; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The service may then be concluded in the usual manner.

For an alternate to this Order, see the rubric at the end of the Order for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, p. 70.
AN ALTERNATE ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

Abridged Form

See rubrics in two previous Orders.

Prayer

Instead of this entire prayer, the last paragraph only may be read, or other suitable prayers may be substituted for those here given.

It is very meet and right, above all things, to give thanks unto thee, O eternal God. For all thy bounties known to us, for all unknown, we give thee thanks; but chiefly, that when, through disobedience, we had fallen from thee, thou didst not suffer us to depart from thee forever, but hast ransomed us from eternal death, and given us the joyful hope of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ thy Son; who, being true and eternal God, became Man for us men, and for our salvation.

Not as we ought but as we are able, we bless thee for his holy incarnation; for his life on earth; for his precious sufferings and death upon the cross; for his resurrection from the dead; and for his glorious ascension to thy right hand.

We bless thee for the giving of the Holy Spirit; for the sacraments and ordinances of the Church; for the communion of Christ’s body and blood; for the great hope of everlasting life, and of an eternal weight of glory.

Thee, mighty God, heavenly King, we magnify and praise. With angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven, we worship and adore thy glorious name.

We most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to vouchsafe unto us thy gracious presence, as we commemorate in this Supper the most blessed sacrifice of thy Son; and to bless and sanctify with thy Word and Spirit these thine own gifts of bread and wine, which we set before thee; that we, receiving them, according to our Savior’s institution, in thankful remembrance of his death and passion, may, through the power of the Holy Spirit, be made true partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to our salvation and the glory of thy most holy name. Amen.
Words of Institution

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, attend to the words of the institution of the holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are delivered by the holy Apostle Paul:

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.”

Exhortation to Self-Examination

That we may now celebrate the Supper of the Lord to our comfort, it is necessary, first, rightly to examine ourselves, and, secondly, to direct the Supper to that end for which it was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let everyone, therefore, first consider his sins and the curse due to him for them, that he may truly humble himself before God. Let everyone also examine his own heart, whether he believes this faithful promise of God, that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ; and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given to him as his own, even as perfectly as if he had satisfied in his own person for all his sins and fulfilled all righteousness. Finally, let everyone examine his own conscience, whether he purposes henceforth to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life, to walk uprightly before him, and to live in love and peace with his neighbor.

All those who are thus minded God will certainly receive in mercy, and count them worthy partakers of the Table of his Son Jesus Christ. On the contrary, according to the command of Christ and the Apostle Paul, we admonish all those who are continuing in unrepented sin to keep themselves from the Lord’s Table.

But this is not designed, dearly beloved Brethren and Sisters in the Lord, to distress the contrite hearts of his people, as if none might come to his Table but those who are without sin. For we do not come to this Supper to
testify that we are righteous in ourselves, but rather that we are conscious of our sinfulness and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. Therefore, notwithstanding we feel that we have not perfect faith, and that we do not serve God with such zeal as we are bound, but have daily to strive with the weakness of our faith and the evil lusts of our flesh; yet, since we are, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, sorry for these weaknesses, and earnestly desirous to fight against our unbelief and to live according to all the commandments of God, therefore we rest assured that no sin or infirmity, which still remains against our will in us, can hinder us from being received of God in mercy, and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly food.

**Meaning of the Sacrament**

Let us also consider to what end the Lord has instituted his Supper: “This do,” he said, “in remembrance of me.”

We are, therefore, to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the promises made in the Old Testament, was sent of the Father into the world; that he assumed our flesh and blood; that he bore for us the wrath of God, under which we should have perished everlastingly; that he fulfilled for us all obedience to the divine law; that he, although innocent, was condemned to death that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God; that he took upon himself the curse due to us, that he might fill us with his blessings; that he humbled himself unto death, even the bitter and shameful death of the cross, when he cried out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken of him; and finally, that he confirmed with the shedding of his blood the new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation, when he said, “It is finished.”

That we might firmly believe that we belong to this covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, instituted the holy Supper, thus teaching us that as often as we eat of this bread and drink of this cup, we are thereby, as by a sure remembrance and pledge, admonished and assured of his hearty love and faithfulness toward us; that, whereas we should otherwise have suffered eternal death, he has given his body to the death of the cross, and shed his blood for us; and will as certainly feed and nourish our hungry and thirsty souls with his crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life, as this bread is broken before our eyes, and this cup is given to us, and we eat and drink in remembrance of him.
From this institution of the holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he directs our faith and trust to his perfect sacrifice, once offered on the cross, as the only ground of our salvation; wherein he is become to our hungry and thirsty souls the true meat and drink of life eternal. For by his death he has taken away the cause of our eternal death and misery, namely, sin; and obtained for us the quickening Spirit, that we by the same Spirit, which dwells in Christ as the Head and in us as his members, may have true communion with him, and be made partakers of all his blessings, of life eternal, righteousness and glory.

So also are we, by the Holy Spirit, to be united as members of one body, in true brotherly love; as the holy Apostle saith, “For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

Hereto assist us the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through his Holy Spirit. Amen.

Here the invitation to partake of the Sacrament may be given to communicants present who are not members of this particular church. If desired, a hymn may then be sung: during which the table may be uncovered and the minister approach thereto, and any necessary change of place among the communicants may be made.

Prayer

Let us pray.

We here present ourselves to thee, O Lord, our souls and bodies, to be a holy and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee that all who are partakers of this holy Communion may be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction. And though we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer to thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits but pardoning our offenses; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or,

O most merciful God and Father, we beseech thee that thou wilt be pleased, in this Supper, in which we celebrate the glorious remembrance of the bitter death of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, to work in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, that we may daily, more and more, with true confidence, give
ourselves up unto thy Son Jesus Christ. May we be fed and comforted with his true body and blood; yea, with him, true God and Man, that only heavenly bread; that we may no longer live in our sins, but he in us, and we in him. Thus may we truly be partakers of the new and everlasting covenant of grace. Suffer us not to doubt that thou wilt forever be our gracious Father, never more imputing our sins unto us, and providing us, as thy beloved children and heirs, with all things necessary, as well for the body as the soul. Grant us also thy grace, that we may take upon us our cross cheerfully, deny ourselves, confess our Savior, and in all tribulations with uplifted heads expect our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, where he will make our mortal bodies like unto his most glorious body and take us unto himself for eternity. Amen.

Confession of Faith

Strengthen us also by this holy Supper in the Christian Faith, whereof we make confession with our mouths and hearts, saying:

*Here the congregation shall rise.*

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 resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Communion

That we may now be fed with the true heavenly bread, Christ Jesus, let us not cleave with our hearts unto the external bread and wine, but lift them up on high in heaven, where Christ Jesus is our Advocate, at the right hand of his heavenly Father, whither all the Articles of our Faith lead us; not doubting that, through the working of the Holy Spirit, we shall as certainly be fed and refreshed in our souls with his body and blood, as we receive the holy bread and wine in remembrance of him.
In breaking and distributing the bread, the minister shall say:

The Bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ.

And when he gives the cup:

The Cup of Blessing which we bless is the communion of the Blood and Christ.

Communion Thanksgiving

After the Communion, the minister shall proceed as follows, the congregation reading its part responsively:

Beloved in the Lord, since the Lord has now fed our souls at his Table, let us therefore jointly praise his holy name with thanksgiving, and everyone say with mouth and heart thus:

Bless the Lord, O my soul:
   And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
   And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
   Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
   Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,
   Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
   Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
   So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
   So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
   So the Lord pitieth them that fear him.
Who hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and given us all things with him.
   Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord from this time forth forevermore. Amen.
Prayer

O almighty, merciful God and Father, we render thee most humble and hearty thanks, that thou hast, of thine infinite mercy, given us thine only begotten Son, for a mediator and a sacrifice for our sins, and to be our meat and drink unto life eternal. Grant, we beseech thee, O faithful God and Father, that through the operation of thy Holy Spirit, the commemoration of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ may tend to the daily increase of our faith, and of our saving fellowship with him; through Jesus Christ thy Son, in whose name we conclude our prayers, saying:

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 forever. Amen.

At the conclusion of the Communion, the table should again be covered.
AN ALTERNATE ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

This, the unabridged, and the following, the abridged, forms of the Sacrament of the Lord’s supper are those as found in Liturgy and Psalms, 1906. They have not been revised except in spelling, rubrics, capitalization, and headings. The rubrics at the beginning of the revised Order apply also to these forms.

Words of Institution

Before the administration of the holy Communion the minister shall say:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, attend to the words of the institution of the holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are delivered by the holy Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 11:23-29).

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup; for he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”

That we may now celebrate the Supper of the Lord to our comfort, it is above all things necessary:

I. Rightly to examine ourselves.

II. To direct the Supper to that end for which Christ has ordained and instituted the same, namely, to his remembrance.

Exhortation to Self-Examination

The true examination of ourselves consists of these three parts:
First. Let everyone consider by himself his sins and the curse due to him for them, to the end that he may abhor and humble himself before God; considering that the wrath of God against sin is so great, that, rather than it should go unpunished, he has punished the same in his beloved Son Jesus Christ, with the bitter and shameful death of the cross.

Secondly. That everyone examine his own heart, whether he believes this faithful promise of God, that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ; and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given him as his own, yea, so perfectly as if he had satisfied in his own person for all his sins and fulfilled all righteousness.

Thirdly. That everyone examine his own conscience, whether he purposes henceforth to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life, and to walk uprightly before him; as also, whether he has laid aside unfeignedly all enmity, hatred, and envy, and does firmly resolve henceforth to walk in true love and peace with his neighbor.

All those, then who are thus disposed God will certainly receive in mercy, and count them worthy partakers of the Table of his Son Jesus Christ. On the contrary, those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Therefore we also, according to the command of Christ and the Apostle Paul, admonish all those who are defiled with the following sins to keep themselves from the table of the Lord, and declare to them that they have no part of the kingdom of Christ: such as all idolaters; all those who invoke deceased saints, angels, or other creatures; all those who worship images; all enchanters, diviners, charmers, and those who confide in such enchantments; all despisers of God and his Word, and of the holy Sacraments; all blasphemers; all those who are given to raise discord, sects, and mutiny, in church or state; all perjured persons; all those who are disobedient to their parents and superiors; all murderers, contentious persons, and those who live in hatred and envy against their neighbors; all adulterers, whoremongers, drunkards, thieves, usurers, robbers, gamblers, covetous; and all who lead offensive lives.

All these, while they continue in such sins, shall abstain from this meat, which Christ has ordained only for the faithful, lest their judgment and condemnation be made the heavier.
But this is not designed, dearly beloved Brethren and Sisters in the Lord, to deject the contrite hearts of the faithful, as if none might come to the Supper of the Lord but those who are without sin. For we do not come to this Supper to testify thereby that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves, but, on the contrary, considering that we seek our life out of ourselves, in Jesus Christ, we acknowledge that we lie in the midst of death. Therefore, notwithstanding we feel many infirmities and miseries in ourselves; as namely, that we have not perfect faith, and that we do not give ourselves to serve God with such zeal as we are bound, but have daily to strive with the weakness of our faith and the evil lusts of our flesh; yet, since we are, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, sorry for these weaknesses, and earnestly desirous to fight against our unbelief, and to live according to all the commandments of God, therefore we rest assured that no sin or infirmity, which still remains against our will in us, can hinder us from being received of God in mercy, and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly meat and drink.

Meaning of the Sacrament

Let us now consider to what end the Lord has instituted his Supper, namely, that we do it in remembrance of him. Now, after this manner are we to remember him by it.

1. The we be confidently persuaded in our hearts, that our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the promises made to our forefathers in the Old Testament, was sent of the Father into the world: that he assumed our flesh and blood: that he bore for us the wrath of God, under which we should have perished everlastingly, from the beginning of his incarnation to the end of his life upon earth: that he fulfilled for us all obedience to the divine law, and righteousness, especially when the weight of our sins and the wrath of God pressed out of him the bloody sweat in the garden, where he was bound that we might be freed from our sins: that he afterward suffered innumerable reproaches, that we might never be confounded; that he, although innocent, was condemned to death, that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God: yea, that he suffered his blessed body to be nailed on the cross, that he might affix thereon the handwriting of our sins: that he also took upon himself the curse due us, that he might fill us with his blessings: that he humbled himself unto the deepest reproach and pains of hell, both in body and soul, on the tree of the cross, when he cried out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” that we might be accepted of God, and never be forsaken of him: and finally that
he confirmed, with his death and shedding of his blood, the new and eternal testament, that covenant of grace and reconciliation, when he said, “It is finished.”

2. And, that we might firmly believe that we belong to this covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his last Supper, “took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and said, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” That is: as often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you shall thereby, as by a sure remembrance and pledge, be admonished and assured of this my hearty love and faithfulness toward you: that whereas you should otherwise have suffered eternal death, I have given my body to the death of the cross, and shed my blood for you; and as certainly feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty soul with my crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life, as this bread is broken before your eyes, and this cup is given to you, and you eat and drink the same with your mouth, in remembrance of me.

From this institution of the holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he directs our faith and trust to his perfect sacrifice, once offered on the cross, as to the only ground and foundation of our salvation; wherein he is become to our hungry and thirsty souls the true meat and drink of life eternal. For by his death he has taken away the cause of our eternal death and misery, namely, sin; and obtained for us the quickening Spirit, that we by the same, which dwells in Christ as the Head and in us as his members, might have true communion with him, and be made partakers of all his blessings, of life eternal, righteousness, and glory.

Besides, that we, by the same Spirit, may also be united as members of one body, in true brotherly love; as the holy Apostle says, “For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” For as out of many grains one meal is ground and one bread baked, and out of many berries being pressed together one wine flows and mixes itself together; so shall we all, who by a true faith are ingrafted into Christ, through brotherly love be all together one body, for the sake of Christ, our beloved Savior, who has so exceedingly loved us; and shall show this, not only in word, but also in very deed toward one another.
Hereto assist us, the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through his Holy Spirit. Amen.

That we may obtain all this, let us humble ourselves before God, and with true faith implore his grace.

Prayer

O most merciful God and Father, we beseech thee that thou wilt be pleased, in this Supper, in which we celebrate the glorious remembrance of the bitter death of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, to work in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, that we may daily, more and more, with true confidence, give ourselves up unto thy Son Jesus Christ, so that our afflicted and contrite hearts, through the power of the Holy Ghost, may be fed and comforted with his true body and blood; yea, with him, true God and Man, that only heavenly bread: and that we may no longer live in our sins, but he in us, and we in him; and thus truly be made partakers of the new and everlasting testament and covenant of grace: that we may not doubt that thou wilt for ever be our gracious Father, never more imputing our sins unto us, and providing us, as thy beloved children and heirs, with all things necessary, as well for the body as the soul. Grant us also thy grace, that we may take upon us our cross cheerfully, deny ourselves, confess our Savior, and in all tribulations with uplifted heads expect our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, where he will make our mortal bodies like unto his most glorious body and take us unto himself for eternity.

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, forever. Amen.

Confession of Faith

Strengthen us also by this holy Supper in the Catholic undoubted Christian Faith, whereof we make confession with our mouths and hearts, saying:

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.

Communion

That we may now be fed with the true heavenly bread, Christ Jesus, let us not cleave with our hearts unto the external bread and wine, but lift them up on high in heaven, where Christ Jesus is our Advocate, at the right hand of his heavenly Father, whither all the Articles of our Faith lead us; not doubting that, through the working of the Holy Spirit, we shall as certainly be fed and refreshed in our souls with his body and blood, as we receive the holy bread and wine in remembrance of him.

In breaking and distributing the bread, the minister shall say:

The Bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ.

And when he gives the cup:

The Cup of Blessing which we bless is the communion of the Blood of Christ.

During the Communion, a Psalm shall or may be devoutly sung, or some chapter read, in remembrance of the death of Christ, as Isaiah 53, John 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, or the like.

Communion Thanksgiving

After the Communion the minister shall say:

Beloved in the Lord, since the Lord has now fed our souls at his Table, let us therefore jointly praise his holy name with thanksgiving, and everyone say in his heart thus:
Bless the Lord, O my soul:
   And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
   And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
   Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
   Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,
   Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
   Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
   So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
   So are hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children.
   So the Lord pitieth them that fear him.
Who hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and
given us all things with him. Therefore God commends therewith his love
toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more
then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath
through him. For, if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by
the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his
life. Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord
from this time forth for evermore. Amen.

Prayer

Let everyone say with an attentive heart:

O almighty, merciful God and Father, we render thee most humble and
hearty thanks, that thou hast, of thine infinite mercy, given us thine only be-
gotten Son, for a mediator and a sacrifice for our sins, and to be our meat
and drink unto life eternal; and that thou givest us lively faith, whereby we
are made partakers of these thy benefits. Thou hast also been pleased, that
thy beloved Son Jesus Christ should institute and ordain his holy Supper for
the confirmation of the same. Grant, we beseech thee, O faithful God and
Father, that, through the operation of thy Holy Spirit, the commemoration
of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ may tend to the daily increase of our
faith, and of our saving fellowship with him; through Jesus Christ thy Son,
our Lord. Amen.
ORDER FOR PROFESSION OF FAITH

In the Reformed Church in America, the board of elders receives people into the life and work of the congregation (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Sec. 2a). Reception of confessing members is based on a candidate’s profession of faith, a reaffirmation of such a profession, or the presentation of a satisfactory certificate from another Christian congregation (BCO, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Sec. 2a, b).

The Order for Profession of Faith is anchored in and builds upon the RCA Order for the Sacrament of Baptism. The order integrates the varied components of receiving confessing members into a congregation: those persons seeking adult baptism, those baptized as infants making initial profession of faith, those reaffirming faith, and those transferring from another Christian church. The order also provides for the baptism of their children.

Part I of this order may be used by the elders in the exercise of their authority. Part II is for use in celebration with the congregation.

PART I: BEFORE THE ELDERS

At the meeting of the elders, the presiding minister of Word and sacrament or the presiding elder shall present each person by name. After the presentation, the order proceeds:

Scripture promises:

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.”

Romans 10:9-11

Let us pray.

O Lord, source of all light and life, illumine us 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 be glorified among your people in both the church and the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
FAITH SHARING

The elders shall engage in a conversation with the people, inquiring concerning their acceptance of the Christian faith and the sincerity of their desire to live as confessing members of the congregation. If personal credos (written faith statements) have been prepared, they shall be presented at this time.

THE QUESTIONS

The minister or presiding elder continues:

Dearly beloved in the Lord,
in baptism, we are grafted into Christ,
received into the household of faith, and
made inheritors of the covenant of which baptism is the sign and seal.
In grace and mercy,
God, by the Holy Spirit,
has implanted faith through Word and sacrament.
You have come now before God and the church
to profess your faith in Christ.

The following questions are written for unison response. If individual responses are desired, the minister or presiding elder may ask all questions, then address each person, “What is your response?”

Do you believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

I do.

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule for faith and life?

I do.

Do you, relying on the grace of God, promise to confess Christ publicly before others, to serve Christ daily, and to walk in Jesus’ way?

I do.
Do you promise to exhibit the joy of new life in Christ; to share fully in the life of the church; to be faithful in worship and service; and to offer your prayers and gifts?

I do.

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the church; to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation; and to seek those things which make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

BLESSING

Be assured that as you declare your faith, God will be faithful to strengthen you, and to renew you by the Holy Spirit, that you may grow in grace and knowledge, and may keep this covenant faithfully all your days.

The meeting shall conclude with the following or another suitable prayer offered by the presiding minister or one of the elders, with all joining in the Lord’s Prayer.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we praise you that by the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself; and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to Christ and his service. We thank you for the baptismal covenant you make with all your servants. As your grace has drawn 

Ns (names of candidates) to you, continue to strengthen and sustain them.

By your Holy Spirit, daily increase in them your gifts: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the reverence of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us to pray, saying:
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.

The elders will reach their decision and may establish the date for the public reception of the new confessing members.

PART II: BEFORE THE CONGREGATION

The public celebration of baptism and profession of faith shall take place during worship on the Lord’s Day after the Word of God has been proclaimed.

PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION

The minister addresses the congregation from the font:

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6
Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s promises to this covenant people. In baptism God promises by grace alone:
- to forgive our sins,
- to adopt us into the Body of Christ, the Church,
- to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us, and
- to resurrect us to eternal life.

This promise is made visible in the water of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font at this time.

Water cleanses,
- purifies,
- refreshes,
- sustains;
Jesus Christ is living water.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience:
- to love and trust God completely,
- to forsake the evil of the world, and
- to live a new and holy life.

Yet, when we fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin, for baptism is the sign and seal of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.

PRESENTATION

An elder shall present the candidates for baptism and/or profession of faith, using the following statements as appropriate; candidates shall come forward as their names are read.

The elders of (name of congregation) have welcomed these persons who appeared before them and made profession of their Christian faith.

Naming all candidates for baptism and initial profession of faith:

NN/s (using full names) come before us to make public this profession of faith and to receive the sacrament of baptism;
Naming all baptized persons, including those making initial profession of faith, those reaffirming faith, and those transferring membership from another congregation:

NN/s (using full names) have been baptized into the body of Christ. In making public this profession of faith they affirm the meaning of their baptism.

If it is the congregation’s desire to note the congregations from which transferring members are being received, there may be an additional statement, “NN/s___________ are received from (church name and location).”

We ask them now to declare their faith before God and Christ’s church, that we may rejoice together and welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the candidates:

Beloved of God,
I ask you before God and Christ’s church
to reject evil,
to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and
to confess the faith of the church.

Do you renounce sin and the power of evil in your life and in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, and, through worship and service, seek to advance God’s purposes here and throughout the world?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

If children of those being received are also to be baptized, the parents are asked:
Do you promise
to instruct these children/this child
    in the truth of God’s Word,
    in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;
to pray for them, to teach them to pray; and
    to train them in Christ’s way by your example,
    through worship, and
    in the nurture of the church?

I do, and I ask God to help me.

The congregation shall rise; the minister or elder addresses the members of
the congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support
    these brothers and sisters
    by teaching the gospel of God’s love,
    by being an example of Christian faith and character, and
    by giving the strong support of God’s family
    in fellowship, prayer, and service?

We do.

The minister or elder addresses the candidates:

Do you promise
    to accept the spiritual guidance of the church,
    to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation, and
    to seek those things that make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

The congregation and the candidates shall join in confessing the faith in the
words of the Apostles’ Creed. The questions may be omitted.

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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 may be seated; the minister continues. If baptism is not to be celebrated, proceed to the blessing and welcome.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks,
O holy and gracious God,
for the gift of water.

In the beginning of creation your Spirit moved over the waters.
In the waters of the flood you destroyed evil.
You led the children of Israel through the sea into the freedom of the promised land.
In the river Jordan, John baptized our Lord and your Spirit anointed him.
By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ, the Living Water, frees us from sin and death and opens the way to life everlasting.
We thank you, O God, for the gift of baptism. 
In this water you confirm to us 
that we are buried with Christ in his death, 
raised to share in his resurrection, and 
are being renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pour out on us your Holy Spirit, 
so that those here baptized 
may be washed clean and receive new life.

To you be all honor and glory, dominion and power, 
now and forever, 
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

If children are to receive baptism, the minister may ask the parents of each child:

What is the name of this child?

The parents shall give the Christian name; the minister may hold infants or small children, addressing each:

N (use Christian name; omit surname),
for you Jesus came into the world; 
for you he died and conquered death; 
all this he did for you, little one, 
though you know nothing of it as yet. 
We love because God first loved us.

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism. 
Using Christian name/s, omitting surname, the minister shall immerse, pour, or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of the person of the Trinity, saying:

N (use Christian name; omit surname), I baptize you 
in the name of the Father, 
and of the Son, 

The minister may mark the sign of the cross on the forehead, saying to each:
N (use Christian name; omit surname), child of the covenant, in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. Amen.

When all have been baptized, the minister may make the following declaration:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the Church, these children of God are now received into the visible membership of the holy catholic Church, engaged to confess the faith of Christ, and to be God’s faithful servant/s until life’s end.

BLESSING AND WELCOME

The minister may continue by laying hands on the heads of all those being received, offering the prayer of blessing. The elders may join in the laying on of hands.

Defend, O Lord, this your servant N (use Christian name; omit surname) 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.

The minister invites the congregation to stand:

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.

Welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Joyfully we receive you.
Join with us as we give witness in the world to the good news, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.
Alleluia.
The following blessing may be said or sung by the congregation while the elders greet the new confessing members:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace. Amen.

*Numbers 6:24-26*
ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

The Sacrament of Baptism should be celebrated as part of the congregation’s worship on the Lord’s Day. It may be administered as part of the Approach or as visible Proclamation of the Word. The requirements of the Reformed Church in America shall be fully met before the baptism takes place (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 11b; Article 5, Section 2a).

PREPARATION

The minister addresses the congregation:

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:18-20

The minister continues, using one or more of the following:

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:

There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of all,
who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

Or

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27-28
Or

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

Or

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:12-13

Or

I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Genesis 17:7

Or

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:29

Or

For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.

Acts 2:39

Baptism
The minister continues:

Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s promises to this covenant people. In baptism God promises by grace alone:
- to forgive our sins;
- to adopt us into the Body of Christ, the Church;
- to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us;
- and to resurrect us to eternal life.

This promise is made visible in the water of baptism.

Water is poured into the font at this time.

Water cleanses;
- purifies;
- refreshes;
- sustains:
Jesus Christ is living water.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience:
- to love and trust God completely;
- to forsake the evil of the world; and
- to live a new and holy life.

Yet, when we fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin,
for baptism is the sign and seal
of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.

PRESENTATION

An elder presents the adult candidates or the parents of children for baptism:

On behalf of the Board of Elders
I present (using full names)
[who bring their child/children]
to receive the sacrament of baptism.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the parents or candidates:

Beloved of God,
you stand before us [having brought this child/these children]
to receive the sacrament of baptism.
I ask you, therefore, before God and Christ’s church
to reject evil,
to profess your faith in Christ Jesus,
and to confess the faith of the church.
Do you renounce sin and the power of evil
in your life and in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

At the baptism of adults:

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation,
and through worship and service
seek to advance God’s purposes here and throughout the world?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

At the baptism of infants or young children:

Do you promise
to instruct this child/these children
in the truth of God’s word,
    in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;
    to pray for them, to teach them to pray;
and to train them in Christ’s way by your example,
    through worship, and
    in the nurture of the church?

I do, and I ask God to help me.

The congregation shall rise; the minister or elder addresses the members of
the congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support
these brothers and sisters
by teaching the gospel of God’s love,
by being an example of Christian faith and character, and
by giving the strong support of God’s family
in fellowship, prayer, and service?

We do.
The congregation and the candidates (or their parents) join in affirming the faith in the words of the Apostles’ Creed. The questions may be omitted.

A

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe 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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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.

Or

B

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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 may be seated now or following the prayer.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The minister says:

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.  

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, O holy and gracious God,  
for the gift of water.  
In the beginning of creation your Spirit moved over the waters.  
In the waters of the flood you destroyed evil.  
You led the children of Israel through the sea  
into the freedom of the promised land.  
In the river Jordan, John baptized our Lord  
and your Spirit anointed him.  
By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ, the Living Water,  
frees us from sin and death and opens the way to life everlasting.

We thank you, O God, for the gift of baptism.  
In this water you confirm to us  
that we are buried with Christ in his death,  
raised to share in his resurrection,  
and are being renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Pour out on us your Holy Spirit,  
so that those here baptized may be washed clean and receive new life.
To you be all honor and glory, dominion and power, now and forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism.

At the baptism of children, the minister may ask the parents of each child:

What is the name of this child?

The parents shall give the Christian name.

The minister may hold infants or small children, addressing each:

N (use Christian name; omit surname),
For you Jesus Christ came into the world; for you he died and for you he conquered death; All this he did for you, little one, though you know nothing of it as yet. We love because God first loved us.

Using Christian name/s, omitting surname, the minister shall either immerse or pour or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of each person of the Trinity, saying:

N (use Christian name; omit surname),
I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may place a hand on the person’s head and may mark on the forehead the sign of the cross, saying to each:

N (use Christian name; omit surname), child of the covenant in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. Amen.

DECLARATION, BLESSING, AND WELCOME

When all have been baptized, the minister may make the following declaration:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the Church, this child/these children of God is/are now received into the visible membership of the holy catholic Church,
engaged to confess the faith of Christ, and
to be God’s faithful servant/s until life’s end.

The minister shall offer the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God,
we thank you that you cleanse and renew
these your children through your grace alone.
Bless and strengthen them daily
with the gift of your Holy Spirit;
unfold to them the riches of your love,
deepening their faith,
keeping them from the power of evil
and enabling them to live a holy and blameless life
until your kingdom comes.

At the baptism of children:

Look with kindness upon these parents.
Let them ever rejoice in the gift you have given them.
Grant them the presence of your Holy Spirit
that they may bring up these children
to know you, to love you, and to serve you. Amen.

The congregation shall stand.

Welcome our new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Joyfully we receive you into the body of Christ.
Join with us as we give witness in the world to the good news,
for we are all one in Christ Jesus.
Alleluia.

The following blessing may be said or sung by the congregation while the elders may greet the baptismal group:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace. Amen. Numbers 6:24-26

The congregation may be seated.
THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

The Sacrament of Baptism should be administered on the Lord’s Day during the primary service of worship. The requirements of the Reformed Church in America regarding the sacrament should have been met fully before the administration of baptism takes place.

Baptism shall be administered using water, by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. It shall take place before the whole congregation.

MEANING OF THE SACRAMENT

The continuity of the Meaning is maintained in the paragraphs in roman type. The paragraphs in italics may be selected to set forth the doctrine in greater fullness.

Beloved in the Lord, the Sacrament of Baptism is a visible, holy sign and seal instituted by God so that he may the more fully reveal and seal to us the promise of the gospel, that because of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross we are, through grace alone, granted the forgiveness of our sins and given new and eternal life.

In baptism God reveals and seals to us his mercy and forgiveness. For, though we are sinners, sinful in our very nature, our sins are washed away in Christ’s blood, poured out for us on the cross, and our old, sinful nature is crucified with him so that we might be brought to live new and holy lives. Of this the Apostle Paul reminds us:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. Romans 6:3-4

In baptism God reveals and seals to us his covenant of salvation, given first to Noah and his whole family whom God saved from the waters of the flood, and renewed time after time through the Patriarchs and Prophets until it reached perfection in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. We participate in this covenant through faith in Christ, and in him become a new creation. So Scripture promises through the Gospel writer John:

To all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. John 1:12-13 NIV
In baptism God reveals and seals to us the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit who through the sacrament assures us that our whole salvation is rooted in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Through the Holy Spirit God begins this good work in us and daily renews us, setting us apart to be members of Christ so that more and more we may die to sin and live in a consecrated and blameless way. So the Apostle Paul speaks to us:

When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-7 NIV

The sign and seal of this promise is made visible in the water of baptism, for as surely as water cleanses us physically, so surely does the blood of Christ cleanse us spiritually.

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call. Acts 2:39 NIV

INSTITUTION

After his resurrection the Lord Jesus came to his disciples and said:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. Matthew 28:18-20

VOWS

It is in fulfillment of our Lord’s institution and command that the Church now administers holy baptism to N._________________(full names)
I ask him her them
and his her their parents
to come before the congregation now that we may together affirm our faith, renew our commitment, and ask God for his grace.

When they have taken their place before the font, the minister shall say:

Let us stand together.

2 BAPTISM, 1987
Then, addressing the candidate(s) or the parents, the minister shall continue:

Beloved in the Lord, you stand before us

having brought this child these children
to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Therefore, before God and Christ’s Church I
ask you to answer sincerely these questions:

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

I do.

Do you acknowledge that you

and this child these children
are (a) sinner(s), sinful by nature, but that by the grace of God alone your sins are
forgiven and your old nature is put to death, so that you may be brought to newness
of life and set apart as a member(s) of the body of Christ?

I do.

Do you promise to pray

for your child children,
for yourself, and for others, asking God’s guidance

in training him her them
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

with him her them
in the life of the Church and by faithful attendance to worship, service, and the of-
fering of prayers and gifts, to the glory of God?

I do, and I ask God, and you his people, to help me to keep these promises.

When all have risen, the minister shall address the congregation.

Do you the members of this congregation now renew your own baptismal vows as
you celebrate this sacrament of grace?
We do.

Do you promise to seek God’s guidance as you welcome

this these brother(s) and sister(s)

into the community of faith and as you provide

him her them

with Christian love and nurture through your prayers and encouragement, your teaching and affection?

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.

The congregation may be seated. If it has not already been done, the minister may pour water into the font.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we thank you for Jesus Christ, who by his sacrifice of death on the cross has saved us from our sin, and by his resurrection from the dead has given us the blessing of eternal life. We praise you that, in Christ, you have made a covenant of grace with your people and appointed the holy Sacrament of Baptism to be its sign and seal.

Send your Holy Spirit to us now, that we who celebrate this sacrament may be renewed in our participation in the saving work of Christ, and that this your child these your children who now receive(s) the water of baptism may also receive spiritual cleansing and newness of life through the Holy Spirit’s power. And remembering that we are not our own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves to you, asking you to work in us that which is pleasing in your sight, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

If there are infants or small children to be baptized the minister may hold them to administer the sacrament. Others to be baptized shall kneel. The minister shall baptize each with water saying:

N__________ (use Christian names, omit surnames)
I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The following declaration may be made:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his Church, I declare that this child is now received into the visible membership of the Holy Catholic Church, and is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to be his faithful servant unto his her life’s end.

or this at the baptism of adults:

This child of God is received into the Body of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Romans 8:16-17 NIV

After baptism has been administered, the following prayer shall be offered.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

O Lord, through your grace alone you cleanse and renew this your child these your children.
Bless him her them and strengthen him her them daily with the power of the Holy Spirit;
unfold to him her them, more and more,
the riches of your love
and deepen his her their faith;
keep him her them from the power of evil,
enabling him her them to live
a holy and blameless life until your kingdom comes.
At the baptism of infants

Bless your servants, these parents, that they may keep the promises they have made. Grant them your presence and your Holy Spirit that they may bring up their children to know you, love you, and serve you. Help them to be living examples of the Christian faith, within their family, and in the Church of your dear Son.

At the baptism of all

Bless also your whole Church and this congregation. Strengthen us to obey your command to go forth and make disciples, to baptize them in your name, and to teach the gospel of Christ. Continue to enrich our life together and to add to the number of the faithful those who are being saved until your kingdom is fulfilled. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

The service of worship shall continue according to the order for the day.
THE ORDER FOR THE SACRAMENT OF INFANT BAPTISM

The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Article 9, Section 4) states that the “Sacrament of Baptism shall be administered if possible at a time and place of public worship. The Office for the Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism must be read.” Except for good reasons, Baptism shall be administered in the church. Parents or guardians must be present to assume the vows. The Church prohibits the practice of others assuming the vows for the parents or for the guardians.

The teaching of the Reformed Church concerning the nature of Baptism and the taking of the vows by the parents presupposes that at least one of them be a communicant member of the Christian Church (see Article 9, The Constitution RCA). The mode of Baptism in the Reformed Church in America is generally that of sprinkling but immersion if desired is valid and proper.

The use of the prayers set forth in this form is not to be regarded as obligatory. As one of the Sacraments, Baptism should be administered after the service of the Word. See the outline for the proper sequence.

Institution

Beloved in the Lord, attend to the words of the institution of the Sacrament of holy Baptism, as they were delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples after his resurrection:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

In fulfillment of our Lord’s institution and command, the Church, acknowledging God’s gracious covenant with his people, recognizes the Sacrament of Baptism as a sign and seal of membership in the body of Christ both to believing adults and to children of the faithful.

Scripture

One or more of these passages shall be read.
Let us therefore hear the Word of God in which this gracious promise is made to us:

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.  

*Genesis 17:7*

*And/or*

For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.  

*Acts 2:39*

*And/or*

Thus Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In thee shall all the nations be blessed.” And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.  

*Galatians 3:6-8, 29*

*And/or*

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.  

*Ephesians 4:4-6*

*And/or*

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.  

*Mark 10:14-16*

**Meaning of the Sacrament**

In the celebration of Christian Baptism we confess that we with our children are sinful by nature and under the judgment of God. We can not enter into God’s kingdom unless we are born again and seek our cleansing and salvation in him alone.

Baptism is a sign and seal of our ingrafting into the body of Christ. We are
baptized in the name of the Triune God, who thereby assures us of the for-
giveness of our sins, through the blood of Christ; of our adoption into the
household of faith; of our daily renewing and cleansing by his Spirit; and of
our resurrection to eternal life.

By this assurance we are called to new obedience: to hold fast to this one
God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to trust and love him with all our heart
and soul and mind and strength; and to forsake the world, crucify our old
nature, and walk in a new and holy life. And if we sometimes, through weak-
ness, fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God’s mercy, nor con-
tinue in sin, since Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s eternal covenant of
grace with us.

That this Sacrament may be celebrated to God’s glory, to the strengthening
of our faith, and to the upbuilding of his Church, let us call on his name.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Father in heaven, we thank thee for Jesus Christ, who
by his cross and resurrection has redeemed us from sin and death, into
which by our disobedience we have fallen, and has given us hope of eter-
nal life. We bless thee, O God, that by him thou hast entered into a covenant
of grace with thy people and appointed the holy Sacrament of Baptism to
be its sign and seal.

Look on us in mercy, we pray, and sanctify with thy Word and Spirit this
Sacrament to the use for which thou hast ordained it; and grant that this
child now to be baptized may through the power of the Holy Spirit be made
a true member of Christ’s body, the Church; and being kept in thy love,
finally obtain his inheritance in thine eternal kingdom.

And remembering that we are not our own but belong to our faithful Sav-
ior, we offer thee ourselves as servants in the fulfillment of thy promise to
be our God and the God of our children; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Confession of Faith

Dearly Beloved, since Baptism is in the name of the Triune God, let us
arise and confess with the Church through the ages our Christian Faith, in the words of 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.

The parents and congregation will remain standing until after the vows.

Vows

Minister to the parents:

Since you, the parents of this child, desire holy Baptism for him you are sincerely to give answer to these questions before God and his Church:

Do you accept the Gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ revealed in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which we have now confessed in the Articles of the Christian Faith as the only way to eternal life?

Do you acknowledge that this child with us is sinful by nature and under the judgment of God, but is received by grace, sanctified in Christ, and numbered among his people, of which Baptism is the sign and seal?

Do you promise to instruct this child in the truth of God’s Word and in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; to pray for him and to teach him to pray; and to train him by your precept and example, as God may give you grace, in all holy living, and in the nurture and worship of the Church? What is your response?

The parents shall respond:
I do.

The Lord bless you and your child, and give you grace faithfully to perform these promises.

Minister to the congregation:

Do you, the members of this congregation, renew your vows under this covenant of grace, and promise to sustain the fellowship of faith and life within the Church of Christ, in which our children are made partakers of him and all his benefits? What is our response?

The congregation shall respond:

We do.

Administration of the Sacrament

When the minister and parents have come to the font, and the congregation is seated, the minister shall say:

N_______, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then the following declaration may be made:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his Church, I declare that this child is now received into the visible membership of the Holy Catholic Church, and is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to be his faithful servant unto his life’s end.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank thee that we may bring our children to thee, and baptize them in thy holy name. Bless this child whom we have brought to thee, and guard, we pray thee, his life and health, and fulfill to him thy gracious promises. Incline him by thy Holy Spirit to take his place in the Church of thy Son Jesus Christ; enable him to overcome the
temptations of the world; and, finally, to obtain an inheritance among thy saints in light.

Bless thy servants, his parents, that they may faithfully perform the duties laid upon them, training their child in the truth of thy Gospel, and walking before him and with him in the beauty of holiness.

Guide us, thy people, by Word and Spirit, in the fulfillment of our vow to sustain the fellowship and life within thy Church for the nurture of this child, that he may grow up into all the fullness of Christ.

Bless, we pray thee, all the children of thy Church, and prepare them hereafter to carry on the work now committed to us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

General Prayers

The General Prayers should be concluded with the Lord’s Prayer if it has not been previously used in the Order.

Hymn

Benediction

If the Sacrament is celebrated in another place in the Order, it should be concluded with the Prayer after Baptism. The service should then continue to follow the Order to the end.
AN ALTERNATE ORDER FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM

The following two Orders are the unabridged and abridged forms of the Sacrament of Baptism as found in the Liturgy and Psalms, 1906. They have not been revised except for spelling, capitalization, rubrics, and headings. The rubrics given at the beginning of the Revised Order apply to these two forms also. For other rubrics see the first Order.

Meaning of the Sacrament

The principal parts of the doctrine of holy Baptism are these three:

First. That we, with our children, are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, insomuch that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again. This the dipping in or sprinkling with water teaches us, whereby the impurity of our souls is signified, and we are admonished to loathe and humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation without ourselves.

Secondly. Holy Baptism witnesses and seals unto us the washing away of our sins, through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesses and seals unto us that he makes an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son seals unto us that he washes us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy Sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

Thirdly. Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts, therefore are we by God, through Baptism, admonished of and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy
Ghost; that we trust in him and love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

And if we sometimes, through weakness, fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God’s mercy nor continue in sin, since Baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God.

Section I is to be read when infants are to be baptized. In case of adult Baptism, proceed directly to the reading of section II.

And although our young children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from Baptism; for as they are, without their knowledge, partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ; as God speaks unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children (Genesis 17:7), saying, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” This also the Apostle Peter testified, with these words (Acts 2:39): “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Therefore God formerly commanded them to be circumcised, which was a seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness of faith; and therefore Christ also embraced them, laid his hands upon them and blessed them (Mark 10:16).

Since then Baptism is come in the place of circumcision, infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of his covenant. And parents are in duty bound further to instruct their children herein, when they shall arrive at years of discretion.

Prayer

That therefore this holy ordinance of God may be administered to his glory, to our comfort, and to the edification of his Church, let us call upon his holy name.

O almighty and eternal God, we beseech thee that thou wilt be pleased, of thine infinite mercy, graciously to look upon these children, and incorpo-
rate them by thy Holy Spirit into thy Son Jesus Christ, that they may be buried with him into his death and be raised with him in newness of life; that they may daily follow him, joyfully bearing their cross, and cleave unto him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love; that they may, with a comfortable sense of thy favor, leave this life, which is nothing but a continual death, and at the last day may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ thy Son; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Ghost, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Vows

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have heard that Baptism is an ordinance of God, to seal unto us and to our seed his covenant. Therefore it must be used for that end, and not out of custom or superstition. That it may then be manifest that you are thus minded, you are to arise and answer sincerely to these questions:

First. Do you acknowledge that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of his Church, ought to be baptized?

Secondly. Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testaments, and in the Articles of the Christian Faith, and which is taught here in this Christian Church, to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation?

Thirdly. Do you promise and intend to see these children, when they come to the years of discretion, instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or to help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?

Answer: Yes.

Administration of the Sacrament

Then the minister of God’s Word, in baptizing, shall say:

\[N \underline{______}, \text{ I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.}\]
Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise thee that thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through thy Holy Spirit, as members of thy only begotten Son, and adopted us to be thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy Baptism. We beseech thee, through the same Son of thy love, that thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by thy Holy Spirit; that they may be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ; that they then may acknowledge thy fatherly goodness and mercy, which thou has shown to them and us, and live in all righteousness, under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify thee, and thy Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost, the one only true God. Amen.

II

Section II is to be read when an adult is to be baptized and admitted to the Lord’s Supper.

However children of Christian parents, although they understand not this mystery, must be baptized by virtue of the covenant; yet it is not lawful to baptize those who have come to years of discretion, except they first be sensible of their sins, and make confession both of their repentance and their faith in Christ. For this cause not only did John the Baptist preach, according to the command of God, the Baptism of repentance, and baptize for the remission of sin those who confessed their sins (Mark 1:4); but our Lord Jesus Christ also commanded his disciples to teach all nations, and then to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, adding this promise: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” According to which rule the Apostles (Acts 2, 10, 16) baptized none who were of years of discretion, but such as made confession of their faith and repentance. Therefore it is not lawful now to baptize any other adult persons than such as have been taught the mysteries of holy Baptism by the preaching of the Gospel, and are able to give an account of their faith by the confession of the mouth.
Vows

If at the same service there are those who, baptized in infancy, now seek admission to the Lord’s Table, these vows may be used for their admission as well as for the adults who are to be baptized and admitted.

Since therefore you, N________, are also desirous of holy Baptism, to the end it may be to you a seal of your engrafting into the Church of God: that it may appear that you [together with you also who have been baptized in infancy] do not only receive the Christian religion, in which you have been privately instructed by us, and of which also you have made confession before us, but that you, through the grace of God, intend and purpose to lead a life according to the same; you are to arise and sincerely give answer before God and his Church:

First. Do you believe in the only true God, distinct in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, who has made heaven and earth, and all that in them is, of nothing, and still maintains and governs them, insomuch that nothing comes to pass, either in heaven or on earth, without his divine will?

Answer: Yes.

Secondly. Do you believe that you are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are a child of wrath by nature, wholly incapable of doing any good and prone to all evil; and that you have frequently, both in thought, word, and deed, transgressed the commandments of the Lord; and are you heartily sorry for these sins?

Answer: Yes.

Thirdly. Do you believe that Christ, who is the true and eternal God, and very man, who took his human nature on him out of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, is given to you of God to be your Savior; and that you do receive, by this faith, remission of sins in his blood; and that you are made, by the power of the Holy Ghost, a member of Jesus Christ and of his Church?

Answer: Yes.

Fourthly. Do you assent to all the Articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here in this Christian Church, according to the Word of God; and
purpose steadfastly to continue in the same doctrine to the end of your life; and also do you reject all heresies and schisms repugnant to this doctrine; and promise to persevere in the communion of our Christian Church, not only in the hearing of the Word, but also in the use of the Lord’s Supper?

Answer: Yes.

Fifthly. Have you taken a firm resolution always to lead a Christian life; to forsake the world and its evil lusts, as is becoming the members of Christ and his Church; and to submit yourself to all Christian admonitions?

Answer: Yes.

The good and great God mercifully grant his grace and blessing to this your purpose, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Administration of the Sacrament

Then the minister of God's Word, in baptizing, shall say:

N_______, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

A declaration may here be made (see previous Order) admitting the candidates to the Lord's Supper.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we give thee most humble and hearty thanks that thou hast called us to the knowledge of thy grace, and unto the faith of thy Son, and unto the covenant of salvation, wherein we are sealed by holy Baptism. Give thy Holy Spirit to these thy servants, that, being born again and made heirs of God, they may keep themselves in thy love, and receive the fulfillment of thy promises; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, the one only true God, lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.
AN ALTERNATE ORDER FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM

Abridged Form

See rubrics in two previous forms.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father in heaven, we bless thee that thou hast been pleased to enter into a covenant of grace with thy people and hast appointed the holy Sacrament of Baptism to be its sign and seal. Enable us to receive it with true faith; and, remembering that we are not our own, but belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Meaning of the Sacrament

Dearly Beloved in the Lord: The principal parts of the doctrine of holy Baptism are these three:

First. That we, with our children, are by nature sinful and guilty before God, and therefore cannot enter the kingdom of God except we be born again.

Secondly. Holy Baptism, through the dipping in or sprinkling with water, witnesses and seals unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. For we are baptized “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” When we are baptized into the name of the Father, God seals unto us his covenant of grace; when we are baptized into the name of the Son, God assures us of our cleansing through the blood of Christ; and when we are baptized into the name of the Holy Spirit, God promises that he will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ.

Thirdly. Since in this holy Sacrament we enter into covenant with God, we are admonished and obliged by it unto a new obedience, that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. And if through weakness we fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s mercy nor continue in sin, since Baptism is a sign and seal of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.
Section I is to be read when infants are to be baptized. In case of adult Baptism, proceed directly to the reading of section II.

Although our young children do not understand these truths, we may not therefore exclude them from Baptism. For as they are, without their knowledge, partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ. For God has spoken unto Abraham, the father of all the faithful, and therefore unto us and our children, saying, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” This he also testified unto us by the Apostle Peter, saying, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Our Lord Jesus Christ also took young children in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them, and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.”

Children are therefore to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of his covenant; and parents are bound to instruct their children in the duties and privileges connected therewith, when they shall arrive at the years of discretion.

Vows

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ: you believe that Baptism is an ordinance of God to seal unto us and to our children his covenant. Therefore it must be used for that end and not out of custom or superstition. That it may then be manifest that you are thus minded, you are to arise and answer sincerely to these questions:

Do you acknowledge that although our children are by nature sinful and guilty before God, they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of his Church, ought to be baptized?

Do you accept the doctrines of salvation, which are contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian Faith, and which are taught here in this Church?

Do you promise to instruct this child in the truths of God’s Word and in
the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; to pray for *him* and teach *him* to pray; and to train *him*, as God may give you grace, in all holy living, to the end that *he* may enjoy eternal life both in this world and in the world to come?

*Answer*: Yes.

*Then the minister, in baptizing, shall say:*

*N_______, I baptize thee into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**Prayer**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank thee that we may bring *this child* to thee, and baptize *him* into thy most holy name. Guard, we beseech thee, *his* life and health, and fulfill to *him* thy gracious promises. Incline *him* by thy Holy Spirit to take the place which belongs to *him* in the Church of thy Son Jesus Christ, and to continue Christ’s faithful servant unto *his* life’s end. Enable *him* to overcome the temptations of the world; to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things; and finally to obtain an inheritance among thy saints in light.

Bless also thy servants, *his* parents, that they may faithfully perform the duties laid upon them, training the *child* whom thou hast given them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and walking before *him* and with *him* in the beauty of holiness.

Bless, we beseech thee, all the children of thy Church; and prepare them hereafter to carry on the work now committed to us. All this we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

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, forever. Amen.
Section II is to be read when an adult is to be baptized and admitted to the Lord’s Supper.

It is, therefore, not lawful to baptize those who have come to years of discretion, except they be sensible of their sins and make confession both of their repentance and of their faith in Christ. Since, then, you are desirous of holy Baptism, that it may be to you a seal of your reception into the Church of God, you are to arise and sincerely give answer before God and his Church:

Vows

If at the same service there are those who, baptized in infancy, now seek admission to the Lord’s Table, the vows may be used for their admission as well as for the adults who are to be baptized and admitted.

Do you believe in the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; who has made heaven and earth and all that in them is, and so maintains and governs them that nothing comes to pass, either in heaven or on earth, without his divine will?

Answer: Yes.

Do you acknowledge that you are by nature sinful and guilty before God, and that you have frequently in thought, word, and deed, transgressed the commandments of God; and are you heartily sorry for these sins?

Answer: Yes.

Do you believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and the Son of Man, is given to you of God to be your Savior, and that you receive by this faith remission of sins in his blood; and that you are made by the power of the Holy Spirit a member of Christ and of his Church?

Answer: Yes.

Do you assent to all the Articles of the Christian religion as they are taught in this Church according to the Word of God; and do you promise to persevere in the communion of the Church, not only in the hearing of the Word, but also in the use of the Lord’s Supper?
Answer: Yes.

Have you taken a firm resolution always to lead a Christian life; to forsake the world and its evil lusts, as is becoming the members of Christ and his Church, and to submit *yourself* to all Christian admonitions?

Answer: Yes.

The good and great God mercifully grant his grace and blessing to this your purpose, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Administration of the Sacrament

*Then the minister, in baptizing, shall say:*

\[\text{N} \quad \text{I baptize thee into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.}\]

*A declaration may here be made (see the first Order) admitting the candidates to the Lord’s Supper.*

Prayer

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we give thee most humble and hearty thanks that thou hast called us to the knowledge of thy grace and the faith of thy Son, and to the covenant of salvation, wherein we are sealed by holy Baptism. Give thy Holy Spirit to *this* thy servant, that, being born again and made *an heir* of God, *he* may keep *himself* in thy love, and receive the fulfillment of thy promises; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, the only true God, lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.
THE ORDER FOR THE BAPTISM OF ADULTS AND THEIR ADMISSION TO THE LORD’S TABLE

The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Article 6) states that it is the office of the elders together with the minister of the Word to “...pass upon the fitness of those who desire to make public confession of faith...” (Sec. 1c). “Only those persons may be received as members of the Church in full communion who have made confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ before the Board of Elders...” (Sec. 6a). From this it seems clear that the minister, if any, and elders shall pass on the fitness of persons desiring to be baptized and received into full communion, admit such as are found to be properly prepared, and authorize their reception into full membership and admission to the Lord’s Table before the congregation.

The following procedure and office fulfill these constitutional provisions. The Order consists of two parts, the one before the elders, offered as a suggestion, and the one before the congregation.

BEFORE THE ELDERS

The suggested Order for the interrogation is the same as that for those baptized in infancy seeking admission to holy Communion. It is given in the following Order, which see.

BEFORE THE CONGREGATION

Baptism and admission to holy Communion should be before the congregation. As one of the Sacraments, Baptism should be administered after the service of the Word. See the outline for the sequence.

Institution

Beloved in the Lord, attend to the words of the institution of the Sacrament of holy Baptism, as they were delivered by our Lord and Savior to his disciples after his resurrection:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20
In fulfillment of our Lord’s institution and command, the Church, acknowledging God’s gracious covenant with his people, recognizes the Sacrament of Baptism as a sign and seal of membership in the body of Christ both to believing adults and to children of the faithful.

**Meaning of the Sacrament**

In the celebration of Christian Baptism we confess that we with our children are sinful by nature and under the judgment of God. We cannot enter into God’s kingdom unless we are born again and seek our cleansing and salvation in him alone.

Baptism is a sign and seal of our ingrafting into the body of Christ. We are baptized in the name of the Triune God, who thereby assures us of the forgiveness of our sins, through the blood of Christ; of our adoption into the household of faith; of our daily renewing and cleansing by his Spirit; and of our resurrection to eternal life.

By this assurance we are called to new obedience; to hold fast to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to trust and love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; and to forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. And if we sometimes, through weakness, fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin, since Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.

That is Sacrament may be celebrated to God’s glory, to the strengthening of our faith, and to the upbuilding of his Church, let us call on his holy name.

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Father in heaven, we thank thee for Jesus Christ, who by his cross and resurrection has redeemed us from sin and death, into which by our disobedience we have fallen, and has given us hope of eternal life. We bless thee, O God, that by him thou hast entered into a covenant of grace with thy people and appointed the holy Sacrament of Baptism to be its sign and seal.
Look on us in mercy, we pray, and sanctify with thy Word and Spirit this Sacrament to the use for which thou hast ordained it; and grant that this thy servant now to be baptized may, through the power of the Holy Spirit, be made a true member of Christ’s body, the Church; and being kept in thy love, finally obtain his inheritance in thine eternal kingdom.

And remembering that we are not our own but belong to our faithful Savior, we offer thee ourselves as servants in the fulfillment of thy promise to be our God and the God of our children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Confession of Faith and Vows

If at the same service there are those who, baptized in infancy, now seek admission to the Lord’s Table, this Confession of Faith and these vows may be used for their admission as well as for the adults who are to be baptized.

Dearly Beloved, you who now seek Christian Baptism [and you who have been baptized in infancy] have already before the elders made a confession of your faith and of your determination to live the Christian life. Now in this most solemn manner before God and his Church, you are to repeat and renew that confession. Let us all arise and confess our Faith, in the words of 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.

The minister shall then put the following questions to the candidate(s):

Do you acknowledge and confess the Apostolic Faith thus affirmed as your Faith, and do you purpose steadfastly to continue to the end of your life in
the truth affirmed in these Articles of the Christian Faith, as they are taught in the Church of Christ, according to the Word of God?

Do you acknowledge that you are delivered from all your sins and miseries only by the saving work of Jesus Christ, and will seek to show true gratitude to God for this deliverance?

Do you promise to make faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the use of the Sacraments; to give faithful adherence to the doctrines and teaching of the Church; to walk in the spirit of Christian fellowship and brotherly love with the congregation; to submit yourself to all Christian admonition; to offer faithfully to the service of God your prayers and your gifts; and to seek the things that make for purity and peace in the Church of Jesus Christ as long as you live? What is your response?

*The candidate(s) shall then reply:*

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

*The minister shall then ask the congregation:*

Do you, the members of this congregation, as those who are already under the privileges and obligations of this covenant, welcome into your fellowship this servant of God who has now confessed his faith in Christ, and pledge to him your confidence and affection as members together with him of this household of faith? What is your response?

*The congregation shall then reply:*

We do.

The congregation may be seated.

**Administration of the Sacrament**

*The candidate kneeling, the minister shall baptize him, saying:*

N_____, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Declaration

The following declaration may then be made, also for those who were baptized in infancy. Each candidate will kneel and the minister, laying his hands on the head of the candidate(s), shall say:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his Church, I declare that N______ (here the minister shall name the person), received into the visible membership of the holy Catholic Church through Baptism, is now admitted to the Lord’s Table.

Prayer

This or another suitable prayer may be used.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, we thank and praise thee that thou hast given to this thy servant power and grace to own and accept for himself thy holy covenant, sealed and confirmed to him in his Baptism. Strengthen him, we pray thee, with the Holy Spirit the Comforter. Increase in him daily thy manifold gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. Keep him from the evil that is in the world. Enable him to walk in the Spirit and so lead him in the knowledge and obedience of thy Word that he may obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

General Prayers

The General Prayers should be concluded with the Lord’s Prayer if it has not been previously used in the Order.

Hymn

Benediction

If the Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated in another place in the Order, it should be concluded with the Prayer after Baptism. The service then should continue to follow the Order to the end.
ORDER FOR CELEBRATING BAPTISM AND
PROFESSING AND REAFFIRMING FAITH
A Combined Order

In the Reformed Church in America, the board of elders receives people into the life and work of the congregation (Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Sec. 2). Reception of confessing members is based on a candidate’s profession of faith, a reaffirmation of such a profession, or a previous profession in another Christian congregation (BCO, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 5, Sec. 2b).

This order is anchored in and builds upon the RCA Order for the Sacrament of Baptism. The order integrates the varied components of receiving confessing members into a congregation: those persons seeking adult baptism, those baptized as infants and making initial profession of faith, those reaffirming faith, and those transferring from another Christian church. The order also provides for the baptism of children.

Part I of this order may be used by the elders. Part II is for use in celebration with the congregation.

PART I: WITH THE ELDERS

At the meeting of the elders, the presiding minister of Word and sacrament or the presiding elder presents each person by name. The promises of God may then be spoken as found in one or more of these passages of Scripture: John 1:12-13; Acts 2:39; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 4:4-6; Romans 6:3-4; Romans 10:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12: 2-13, 27; 1 Peter 2:9.

This or a similar prayer may be offered:

O Lord, you have loved us first, you called us by name, you bless us with your presence, and you lead us into your future.

We are grateful for your promises to us, and we ask you to empower these disciples as they make their promises to you, that they may walk in your grace and faithfully live for you all their days.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FAITH SHARING

The elders may engage in a conversation with the people concerning their acceptance of the Christian faith and the sincerity of their desire to live as confessing members of the congregation. If personal credos (written faith statements) have been prepared, they may be presented at this time.

THE QUESTIONS

The minister or presiding elder continues:

Friends in Christ, whatever our journey to this point we remember that in baptism God claims us and seals us to show that we belong to Jesus Christ;
God frees us from sin and death;
God unites us to Jesus in his death and resurrection;
God makes us members of the church, the body of Christ; and
God empowers us by the Spirit to join Christ’s mission in the world.

You have come now before God and the church to profess your faith in Christ.

The following questions are written for unison response. If individual responses are desired, the minister or presiding elder may ask all of the questions, and then address each person, asking, “What is your response?” All persons seeking membership are asked these questions.

Do you believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

I do.

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule for faith and life?

I do.

Do you, relying on the grace of God, promise to confess Christ publicly before others, to serve Christ daily, and to walk in Jesus’ way?

I do.

Do you promise to exhibit the joy of new life in Christ; to share fully in the life of the church; to be faithful in worship and service; and to offer your prayers and gifts?

I do.

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the church; to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation; and to seek those things which make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

BLESSING

Be assured that as you declare your faith, God will be faithful to strengthen you, and to renew you by the Holy Spirit, that you may grow in grace and knowledge, and may keep your promises faithfully all your days.

The meeting shall conclude with prayer and may include all joining in the Lord’s Prayer.
PART II: BEFORE THE CONGREGATION

The public celebration of baptism, profession of faith, reaffirmation of faith, or reception from another congregation is ordinarily celebrated during worship on the Lord’s Day. It is appropriately celebrated following the reading and proclamation of the Word.

PREPARATION

The minister addresses the congregation from the font:

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:
“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 4:4-6

And/or John 1:12-13; Acts 2:39; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:10; Romans 6:3-4; Romans 10:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:2-13, 27; 1 Peter 2:9

Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s promises to this covenant people. In baptism God promises by grace alone:
to forgive our sins,
to adopt us into the body of Christ, the church,
to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us, and
to resurrect us to eternal life.

This promise is made visible in the water of baptism.

Water shall be poured into the font at this time.

Water cleanses,
purifies,
refreshes,
sustains;
Jesus Christ is living water.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience:
to love and trust God completely,
to forsake the evil of the world, and
to live a new and holy life.
Yet, when we fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin, for baptism is the sign and seal of God’s eternal covenant of grace with us.

PRESENTATION

An elder shall present the candidates using the following statements as appropriate.

The elders of (name of congregation) have welcomed these persons who appeared before them and made profession of their Christian faith. We ask them now to declare their faith before God and Christ’s church, that we may rejoice together and welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Candidates shall come forward as their names are read.

For reception from another congregation:

NN/s___________ is/are received from (church name and location).

Other means of recognition and/or reception may also be used at this point.

For reaffirmation of faith:

NN/s (using full name/s) come/s before us to publicly reaffirm her/his/their faith.

For profession of faith by those previously baptized in a Christian church:

NN/s (using full name/s) has/have been baptized into the body of Christ. In making public this profession of faith she/he/they affirm/s the meaning of her/his/their baptism.

For initial profession of faith and baptism:

NN/s (using full name/s) come/s before us to make public profession of her/his/their faith and to receive the sacrament of baptism.

For the baptism of children:

NN/s (using full name/s) come/s before us to present her/his/their daughter(s)/son(s), NN/s, (using full name/s) to receive the sacrament of baptism.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the candidates:

Beloved of God, I ask you before God and Christ’s church to reject evil, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the church. Do you renounce sin and the power of evil in your life and in the world?
I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

**Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.**

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, and, through worship and service, seek to advance God’s purposes here and throughout the world?

**I will, and I ask God to help me.**

If children are being baptized the parents are asked:

Do you promise
to instruct these children/this child
in the truth of God’s Word,
in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;
to pray for them, to teach them to pray; and
to train them in Christ’s way by your example, through worship, and
in the nurture of the church?

I do, and I ask God to help me.

The congregation shall rise; the minister or elder addresses the members of the congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support *these brothers and sisters*
by teaching the gospel of God’s love,
by being an example of Christian faith and character, and
by giving the strong support of God’s family
in fellowship, prayer, and service?

We do.

The minister or elder addresses the candidates:

Do you promise
to accept the spiritual guidance of the church,
to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation, and
to seek those things that make for unity, purity, and peace?

I do.

The congregation and the candidates shall join in confessing the faith in the words of the Apostles’ Creed. The questions may be omitted.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**
Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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 may be seated; the minister continues.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, O holy and gracious God, for the gift of water.

In the beginning of creation your Spirit moved over the waters. In the waters of the flood you destroyed evil. You led the children of Israel through the sea into the freedom of the promised land. In the river Jordan, John baptized our Lord and your Spirit anointed him. By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ, the Living Water, frees us from sin and death and opens the way to life everlasting. We thank you, O God, for the gift of baptism. In this water you confirm to us that we are buried with Christ in his death, raised to share in his resurrection, and are being renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pour out on us your Holy Spirit, so that those here baptized
may be washed clean and receive new life.

To you be all honor and glory, dominion and power, now and forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

For reception from another congregation:

Standing at the font the minister addresses the person professing faith. If the person is able, she or he is invited to kneel. The candidate may touch the water before kneeling.

The minister may mark the sign of the cross on the forehead with a gesture or using oil and shall say:

N (Christian name only, no surname), remember that you are baptized, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as God’s own forever.

The minister may continue by laying hands on the head of each candidate offering one of the following prayers of blessing.

Defend, O Lord, this your servant N (Christian name only, no surname) 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.

Or

O Lord, stir up in N (Christian name only, no surname) the gift of your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the Spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. Amen.

Or

Father in heaven, for Jesus’ sake, stir up in N (Christian name only, no surname) the gift of your Holy Spirit. Confirm her/his faith, Guide her/his life, Empower her/his serving, Give her/him patience in suffering, And bring her/him to everlasting life, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For those making reaffirmation of their faith:
Standing at the font the minister addresses the person professing faith. If the person is able, she or he is invited to kneel. The candidate may touch the water before kneeling.

The minister may mark the sign of the cross on the forehead with a gesture or using oil and shall say:

N (Christian name only, no surname), remember that you are baptized, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as God’s own forever.

The minister continues by laying hands on the head of each candidate, offering a prayer of blessing. (Use one of the prayers of blessing offered above.)

For those making a profession who have been previously baptized:

Standing at the font the minister addresses the person professing faith. If the person is able, she or he is invited to kneel. The candidate may touch the water before kneeling.

N (Christian name only, no surname), remember that you are baptized, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as God’s own forever.

The minister continues by laying hands on the head of each candidate, offering a prayer of blessing. (Use one of the prayers of blessing offered above.)

For those making a profession of faith and requiring baptism:

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism.

Standing at the font the minister addresses the person professing faith. If the person is able, she or he is invited to kneel.

Using Christian name/s, omitting surname/s, the minister shall immerse, pour, or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of the person of the Trinity, saying:

N (Christian name only, no surname), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may mark the sign of the cross on the forehead with a gesture or using oil, saying to each:

N (use Christian name; omit surname), in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. Amen.

The minister continues by laying hands on the head of each candidate, offering a prayer of blessing. (Use one of the prayers of blessing offered above.)

For the baptism of children:

If children are to receive baptism, the minister may ask the parents of each child:
What is the name of this child?

The parents shall give the Christian name; the minister may hold infants or small children, addressing each:

N (Christian name only, no surname), for you Jesus came into the world; for you he died and conquered death; all this he did for you, little one, though you know nothing of it as yet. We love because God first loved us.

Using Christian name/s, omitting surname/s, the minister shall immerse, pour, or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each name of the person of the Trinity, saying:

N (Christian name only, no surname), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may mark the sign of the cross on the forehead with a gesture or using oil, saying to each:

N (Christian name only, no surname), child of the covenant, in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. Amen.

DECLARATION AND WELCOME

When all have been baptized, the minister may make the following declaration:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the Church, these sisters and brothers are now received into the visible membership of the holy catholic Church, engaged to confess the faith of Christ, and to be God’s faithful servant/s until life’s end.

The minister invites the congregation to stand:

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.

The minister says:

Welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ.

An appropriate gesture of welcome or the following words may be used:
Joyfully we receive you.
Join with us as we give witness in the world to the good news,
for we are all one in Christ Jesus.
Alleluia.
ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

This marriage service is brief and may be used in a variety of settings, although a Christian marriage service should be held in the church. Where alternatives are given (prayers, declarations of intent, affirmations, lessons, vows, ring exchange, declaration, and dismissal), the minister together with the couple may select the portions to be used.

As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the minister and the supervision of the consistory.

As people gather, music appropriate to the praise of God may be offered. At the appointed time the bride, groom, and other members of the wedding party stand before the minister. The families of the bride and groom may stand with the couple.

During the entrance of the wedding party, the people may stand and sing a hymn, an anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

PREPARATION

SENTENCES

The minister calls the people to worship, either before or after the entrance, using one or more of the following, or another appropriate verse from Scripture.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124:8

Amen.

God is love, and those who abide in love, abide in God, and God abides in them.

1 John 4:16b

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24
SALUTATION

Grace and peace be yours in abundance, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

2 Peter 1:2 (NIV)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

After the people have been seated, the minister may state the gift and purpose of Christian marriage, using the following or similar words:

We have come together in the presence of God for the marriage of N___________ and N___________, to share their joy, and to promise them our support and love.

Christian marriage is a joyful covenanting between a man and a woman. In this covenant they proclaim, before God and human witnesses, their commitment to live together in spiritual, physical, and material unity. In this covenant they acknowledge that the great love God has shown for each of them enables them to love each other. They affirm that God’s gracious presence and abiding power are needed for them to keep their vows, to continue to live in love, and to be faithful servants of Christ in this world. Human commitment is fragile and human love imperfect, but the promise of God is eternal and the love of God can bring our love to perfection.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our maker and redeemer, as you gladdened the wedding at Cana by the presence of your Son, so by your Spirit bring joy to this day. Let the love we celebrate today be a sign of your eternal love. As we honor the union of a man and a woman,
draw us into unity with you, 
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or

Gracious God, 
who gives the covenant of marriage, 
be with us now 
as we celebrate the marriage of N___________ and N___________.
Give them your blessing, 
grant them happiness and long life together, 
and help us support them with our love. Amen.

DECLARATIONS OF INTENT

A

The minister addresses the groom:

N (Christian name), do you take N___________ to be your wife?

The groom says:

I do.

Will you love her, comfort her, honor and protect her, 
and forsaking all others, be faithful to her 
as long as you both shall live?

The groom says:

I will.

The minister addresses the bride:

N (Christian name), do you take N___________ to be your husband?

The bride says:

I do.

Will you love him, comfort him, honor and protect him, 
and forsaking all others, be faithful to him 
as long as you both shall live?
The bride says:

I will.

Or

B

The minister addresses the groom:

_N (Christian name), will you receive ___ as your wife and bind yourself to her in the covenant of marriage? Will you promise to love and honor her in true devotion, to rejoice with her in times of gladness, to grieve with her in times of sorrow, and to be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

The groom says:

I will, with the help of God.

The minister addresses the bride:

_N (Christian name only), will you receive ___ as your husband and bind yourself to him in the covenant of marriage? Will you promise to love and honor him in true devotion, to rejoice with him in times of gladness, to grieve with him in times of sorrow, and to be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

The bride says:

I will, with the help of God.

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAMILIES AND CONGREGATION

Affirmations may be made at the discretion of the minister in consultation with the couple. It is important to consider use of affirmations when there are children from previous relationships. The minister may address the parents:
Will you, the parents of \( N \) and \( N \) (Christian names only)
give your blessing to this new family?
Will you support it with your love and care?

**We will, with the help of God.**

The minister may ask children of the bride or groom:

\( N \) (s), will you accept and support this marriage?

**We will.**

The minister may address the bride and groom:

\( N \) and \( N \),
will you be faithful and loving parents
to \( N/s \) ?

**We will.**

The minister may ask the congregation:

Will you, their friends and family,
support this couple now,
and in the years ahead?

**We will.**

The families return to their places, the minister continues:

**THE WORD OF GOD**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

O Lord our God,
give us grace to receive your Word in faith and love,
that we may be obedient to your will
and live always for your glory;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

**READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE**

One or more lessons from Scripture shall be read.

**CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**
Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

*Genesis 1:26-28, 31a*

Then the Lord God said,  
“It is not good that the man should be alone;  
I will make him a helper as his partner.”

So out of the ground  
the Lord God formed every animal of the field  
and every bird of the air,  
and brought them to the man  
to see what he would call them;  
and whatever the man called every living creature,  
that was its name.  
The man gave names to all cattle,  
and to the birds of the air,  
and to every animal of the field;  
but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man,  
and he slept;  
then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.  
And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man  
he made into a woman  
and brought her to the man.  
Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one shall be called Woman,  
for out of Man this one was taken.”  
Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother  
and clings to his wife,  
and they become one flesh.  
And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.  

*Genesis 2:18-25*

**CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**
Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

*Song of Solomon 8:6-7*

Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and of people. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

*Proverbs 3:3-6*

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

*Psalm 37:3-6*

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection;
outdo one another in showing honor.  
Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.  
Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.  
Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.  
Bless those who persecute you;  
bless and do not curse them.  
Rejoice with those who rejoice,  
weep with those who weep.  
Live in harmony with one another;  
do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;  
do not claim to be wiser than you are.  
Do not repay anyone evil for evil,  
but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.  
If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters,  
I do not want you to be uninformed.  
But strive for the greater gifts.  
And I will show you a still more excellent way.  
If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels,  
but do not have love,  
I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.  
And if I have prophetic powers,  
and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,  
and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,  
but do not have love,  
I am nothing.  
If I give away all my possessions,  
and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,  
but do not have love,  
I gain nothing.  
Love is patient; love is kind;  
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.  
It does not insist on its own way;  
it is not irritable or resentful;  
it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.  
It bears all things, believes all things,  
hopes all things, endures all things.  
Love never ends.  
But as for prophecies, they will come to an end;  
as for tongues, they will cease;  
as for knowledge, it will come to an end.

1 Corinthians 12:1, 31–13:8a
As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Colossians 3:12-17**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God,
and they abide in God.
So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.
God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.

1 John 4:7-16

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain;
and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.
Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:1-10

He answered, “Have you not read
that the one who made them at the beginning
‘made them male and female,’ and said,
‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh’?
So they are no longer two, but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together,
let no one separate.”

Matthew 19:4-6

And one of them, a lawyer,
asked him a question to test him.
“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”
He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.’
This is the greatest and first commandment.
And a second is like it:
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Matthew 22:35-40

On the third day
there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there.
Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.
When the wine gave out,
the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”
And Jesus said to her,
“Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?
My hour has not yet come.”
His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”
Now standing there were six stone water jars
for the Jewish rites of purification,
each holding twenty or thirty gallons.
Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.”
And they filled them up to the brim.
He said to them, “Now draw some out,
and take it to the chief steward.”
So they took it.
When the steward tasted the water that had become wine,
and did not know where it came from
(though the servants who had drawn the water knew),
the steward called the bridegroom and said to him,
“Everyone serves the good wine first,
and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk.
But you have kept the good wine until now.”
Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee,
and revealed his glory;
and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-11

As the Father has loved me,
so I have loved you;
abide in my love.
If you keep my commandments,
you will abide in my love,
just as I have kept my Father’s commandments
and abide in his love.
I have said these things to you
so that my joy may be in you,
and that your joy may be complete.
This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.
You are my friends if you do what I command you.

John 15:9-14

SERMON

After Scripture is read, a brief sermon shall be preached. A hymn, psalm, or
other appropriate music may follow.

THE MARRIAGE

VOWS

The minister addresses the couple:

N_____ and N_____,
join hands,
and in faith make your promises to each other.

The bride and groom face each other, join hands, and say their vows to each
other.

I, N_____ , take you, N_____, to be my wife/husband,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
as long as we both shall live.
To this covenant I pledge myself,
truly, with all my heart.

Or
I, N_____, take you, N_____, to be my wife/husband.
I promise,
before God and these witnesses,
to be your loving and faithful husband/wife,
in plenty and in want,
in joy and in sorrow,
in sickness and in health,
as long as we both shall live.

Or

Before God and these witnesses
I, N_____, take you, N_____, to be my wife/husband.
I promise to love you,
and to be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

Or

I take you, N_____,
to be my wife/husband from this day forward,
to join with you and share all that is to come.
I promise to be faithful to you
until death parts us.

GIVING AND RECEIVING OF RINGS

If rings are to be exchanged, the minister may say to the groom:

What do you bring as a sign of your promise?

The minister shall receive the ring for the bride from its bearer and may pray:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of this ring,
that he who gives it and she who wears it
may live in love and faithfulness all their days,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As the groom places the ring on the bride’s finger, he says:

N_____, I give you this ring
as a sign of the covenant
we have made today,
in the name of the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.

Or

N____., I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With all that I am
and all that I have
I honor you.

Or

This ring I give you
in token and pledge
of my constant faith and abiding love.

Or

I give you this ring in God’s name
as a symbol of all we have promised
and all that we shall share.

Then the minister may say to the bride:

What do you bring as a sign of your promise?

The minister shall receive the ring for the groom from its bearer and
may pray:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of this ring,
that she who gives it and he who wears it
may live in love and faithfulness all their days,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As the bride places the ring on the groom’s finger, she says:

N____., I give you this ring
as a sign of the covenant
we have made today,
in the name of the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.
Or

_N_____, I give you this ring as a symbol of our marriage. With all that I am and all that I have I honor you._

Or

_This ring I give you in token and pledge of my constant faith and abiding love._

Or

_I give you this ring in God’s name as a symbol of all we have promised and all that we shall share._

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

_The minister addresses the congregation:_

_N____ and N_____ (Christian names) have made their covenant of marriage together before God and all here present, by solemn vows, with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of rings. Therefore, I declare that they are husband and wife; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit._

_Following the nuptial kiss/embrace, the minister continues:_

_Let no one come between those whom God has joined together._

Or

_Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate._

*Matthew 19:6*
PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

The couple may kneel or remain standing and face the minister.

Let us pray.

Eternal God,
creator and preserver of all life,
author of salvation, and giver of all grace:
look with favor upon the world you have made and redeemed,
and especially upon N_____ and N_____.

Give them wisdom and devotion
in their life together,
that each may be to the other
a companion in joy,
a comfort in sorrow,
and a strength in need.

Give them the grace,
when they hurt each other,
to recognize and confess their fault,
and to seek each other’s forgiveness
and yours.

Make their life together
a sign of Christ’s love
to this sinful and broken world,
that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt,
and joy conquer despair.

Give to them, if it is your will,
the gift of children,
and the wisdom to bring them up
to know you,
to love you,
and to serve you.

Enrich with your grace
all husbands and wives, parents and children,
that, loving and supporting one another,
they may serve those in need
and be a sign of your kingdom.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
Grant your Spirit to unite all your children
so that your peace and justice may fill the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or

Eternal God,
without your grace no promise is sure.
Strengthen N_____ and N_____ with patience, kindness, gentleness, and all other gifts of your Spirit, so that they may fulfill the vows they have made.
Fill them with such love and joy that they may build a home of peace and welcome.
Guide them by your Word to serve you all their days.

Gracious God, you are merciful and forgiving.
Grant that N_____ and N____, their families, and all who care for them may accept your generous love.
Heal their memories, comfort them, and send them all from here renewed and hopeful.

Help us all, O God, to do your will in each of our homes and lives.
Enrich us with your grace so that, supporting one another, we may serve those in need, hastening the coming of peace, love, and justice on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or

Eternal God, creator of us all, we praise you for all the ways in which your love comes into our lives, and for all the joys that can come to men and women through marriage.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
Today we especially pray for N_____ and N_____ as they begin their married life.
We thank you for the love and care of their parents, which has guided them to maturity and prepared them for this day.

Give them strength
to keep the vows they have made,
and to be loyal and faithful to each other.
May they support each other always, bearing each other’s burdens
and sharing each other’s joys.
Help them to be honest and patient with each other;
may they be wise and loving parents,
and welcome both friend and stranger.

In their future together
may they enjoy each other
and grow through the love they share,
until, at the end of this life,
you receive us all into your eternal kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Or

Eternal God,
in whom we live and move and have our being,
bless N_____ and N_____,
that they may live together in marriage according to the vows they have made before you.

Bless them with your love,
that their love for each other may grow ever deeper,
and their love for you may shine forth before the world.

Bless them with your mercy,
that they may be patient and caring, willing to share each other’s joys and sorrows, to forgive and to be forgiven, in their life together and in the world.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
Bless them with your peace,
that they may be calm and sure,
trusting in you with confident hearts.
May they live in harmony and concord
within their family and among all people.

Bless them with your presence,
that within their hearts and home
Christ may reign as head.
May they confess Christ
with praise and thanksgiving,
now and through all their life together,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name;
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Given 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.

A hymn or other appropriate music may follow.

BENEDICTION

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord be kind and gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26, adapted

Or

The grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,
the Holy Spirit keep you, 
that you may live in faith, 
abound in hope, 
and grow in love, 
both now and forevermore.

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, 
the love of God, 
and the communion of the Holy Spirit 
be with all of you. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14
ORDER OF WORSHIP
FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

THE APPROACH TO GOD

*The service of worship may begin with instrumental and/or choral music in praise of God. When the wedding party has assembled they may approach the front of the church during a*

**PROCEDENTIAL HYMN**

*All present shall stand to sing, and remain standing through the Salutation.*

**VOTUM**

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Amen.

**SENTENCES**

*One of the following or another appropriate scriptural sentence shall be read.*

I will sing of the Lord’s great love forever;

**with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known to all generations.**

I will declare that your love stands firm forever,

**that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.**  
*Psalm 89:1-2*

*Or,*

O servants of the Lord, you that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God! Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing to his name, for he is gracious!  
*Psalm 135:1b-3*

**SALUTATION**

Grace and peace be yours in fullest measure, through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. Amen.  
*II Peter 1:2*
DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

After the people have been seated, the minister shall say:

We are gathered here to praise God for the covenant of grace and reconciliation made with us through Jesus Christ, to hear it proclaimed anew, and to respond to it as we witness the covenant of marriage N. N. _______ and N. N. _______ make with each other in Christ’s name.

Christian marriage is a joyful covenanting between a man and a woman in which they proclaim, before God and human witnesses, their commitment to live together in spiritual, physical, and material unity. In this covenant they acknowledge that the great love God has shown for each of them enables them to love each other. They affirm that God’s gracious presence and abiding power are needed for them to keep their vows, to continue to live in love, and to be faithful servants of Christ in this world. For human commitment is fragile and human love imperfect, but the promise of God is eternal and the love of God can bring our love to perfection.

THE WORD OF GOD

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Most gracious God, be with us in this time of joy and celebration. Reveal the good news of your love for us in the proclamation of your Word. Enable us to respond to you with faithfulness and obedience, so that in all we do and say your name may be praised. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

LESSONS

One or more lessons from Scripture shall be read. If there is only one lesson, it shall be from the New Testament.


Epistle: I Corinthians 12:31-13:8a; Ephesians 3:14-21; Colossians 3:12-17; I John 4:7-16

SERMON

The minister may preach a brief sermon relating the Word of God to the response of Christian Marriage.

PRAYER FOR BLESSING

Almighty God, through your grace write these words in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruits of the Spirit, to the honor and praise of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE RESPONSE TO GOD

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

The persons to be married shall stand with their attendants before the minister, who shall ask the man:

N.______ will you receive N.______ as your wife and bind yourself to her in the covenant of marriage? Will you promise to love and honor her in true devotion; to rejoice with her in times of felicity and grieve with her in times of sorrow; and be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

I will, with the help of God.

The minister shall ask the woman:

N.______ will you receive N.______ as your husband and bind yourself to him in the covenant of marriage? Will you promise to love and honor him in true devotion; to rejoice with him in times of felicity and grieve with him in times of sorrow; and be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

I will, with the help of God.

The minister shall ask the family members of the persons to be married to stand. When they have done so, the minister shall ask:

Will you receive N._____ and N._____ into your family and uphold them with your love as they establish themselves as a family within your own?

We will.
The minister shall ask all present to stand. When they have done so, the minister shall ask:

Will you who witness this covenant between N.______ and N.______ respect their marriage and sustain them with your friendship and care?

We will.

VOWS

The minister shall say to the man and the woman:

N.______ and N.______, before God and these witnesses, make your covenant of marriage with each other.

Vows may be exchanged to Form I or Form II below.

Form I

The man shall face the woman, take her hand in his, and say:

I, N.______ take you, N.______, to be my wife,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
as long as we both shall live.
To this I pledge myself
truly with all my heart.

The minister shall receive the ring from its bearer and give it to the man, who shall place it on the hand of the woman and say:

This ring I give in token of the covenant made this day between us; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The woman, still facing the man and taking his hand in hers, shall say:

I, N.______ take you, N.______, to be my husband,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
as long as we both shall live.
To this I pledge myself
truly with all my heart.

_The minister shall receive the ring from its bearer and give it to the woman, who shall place it on the hand of the man and say:_

This ring I give in token of the covenant made this day between us; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

_Or,_

**Form II**

_The man and the woman shall face each other and take hands. They shall say to each other, in turn,_

_N._____,_
I give myself to you in marriage
and vow to be your _husband_ _wife_
all the days of our lives.

I give you my hands
and take your hands in mine
as a symbol and pledge
of our uniting in one flesh.

I give you my love,
the outpouring of my heart,
as a symbol and pledge
of our uniting in one spirit.

I give you this ring
from out of my worldly goods
as a symbol and pledge
of our uniting as one family.
After each has said the vows, he/she shall take the ring from the minister and place it on the other’s hand.

BLESSING

Prayer may be offered according to Form I or Form II. The minister may ask the married persons to kneel, or to remain standing and face the minister.

Form I

Let us ask for the blessing of the Lord.

Eternal God,  
in whom we live and move and have our being;  
bless N.______ and N.______  
that they may live together in marriage  
according to the vows they have made before you.

Bless them with your love,  
that their love for each other  
may grow ever deeper,  
and their love for you may shine forth  
before the world.

Bless them with your mercy  
that they may be patient and caring,  
willing to share each other’s joys and sorrows,  
to forgive and to be forgiven,  
in their life together and in the world.

Bless them with your peace,  
that they may be calm and sure,  
trusting in you with confident hearts  
and living in harmony and concord  
within their family and among all people.

Bless them with your presence,  
that within their hearts and their home  
Christ may reign as head,  
and that they may acknowledge his Lordship  
with praise and thanksgiving
now, and through all their life together, to the glory of your holy name! Amen.

Or;

Form II

Let us pray.

O God, Creator of life, Author of Salvation and Giver of all good gifts; look with favor upon N.______ and N.______ who have covenanted marriage in your name. Bless their union, and sustain them in their devotion to each other and to you.

Grant them the desire to order their lives according to your will, that in their relationship with each other, and those around them, they may show forth the joy and peace of Christ.

Sustain them in the seasons and conditions of their lives by the power of your Holy Spirit, that in joy and sorrow, leisure and labor, plenty and want, they may give thanks for your steadfast love and declare your faithfulness before the world.

Increase in them the will to grow in faith and service to Christ. Let their life together bear witness to the healing and reconciling love of Christ for this troubled, broken world.

Give them a deep appreciation of the unity of all persons within your creation, that their love for each other may be reflected also in their desire for justice, dignity and meaning for all your children.

Keep ever vivid in their hearts a vision of your kingdom, and enable them to live in the hope of its fulfillment. By the power of your Spirit, O God, accomplish these petitions as they accord with your will, for we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DECLARATION

N.______ and N.______ have made their covenant of marriage together before God and all here present, by solemn vows, by the joining of hands, and the giving and receiving of rings. Therefore, I declare that they are husband and wife; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
and (to the couple)

Be united; live in peace, and the God of peace and love will be with you.  
II Corinthians 12:11

or (to all present)

They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, no one may divide. Amen.  
Matthew 19:6

PEACE

The husband and wife greet each other with the kiss of peace.

BENEDICTION

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.  
II Corinthians 12:13

RECESSIONAL HYMN

A hymn of thanksgiving may be sung, or instrumental music played, during which the married persons and their attendants may recess.
ORDER OF SERVICE FOR
THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE

At the proper time and place, the man and the woman to be married shall stand before the minister; the man at the right hand of the woman, when the minister shall say:

Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Then the minister shall say to all present:

Dearly Beloved, we are assembled here in the sight of God and in the presence of this company to join this man and this woman in the bonds of holy marriage; which is an honorable estate, instituted by God when he said that a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be one flesh. It was confirmed by the words of our blessed Savior; hallowed by his presence at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; and compared by St. Paul to the mystical union between Christ and his Church. It ought not, therefore, to be entered into lightly or hastily, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God.

These two persons have come to be joined into this holy estate. If any man, therefore, can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now declare it, or else hereafter hold his peace.

Speaking to those who have come to be married, the minister shall say:

I charge you, each and both, as you shall answer to him before whom the secrets of all hearts are open, that if either of you know any reason why you may not lawfully be joined in marriage, declare it now. For be well assured that if any persons are joined together contrary to the Word of God, their marriage is not blessed of God nor is it lawful in his sight.

If no impediment appear, the minister may offer the following or some other prayer or proceed directly to the interrogation.
Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, giver of all good gifts, look with favor, we pray thee, on these thy servants who lift up their hearts to thee. Enable them to make their vows to one another in all sincerity, as in thy sight, and to be faithful hereafter in keeping them, to the glory of thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Vows

The minister, before asking the questions, shall say:

Dearly Beloved, hear what the Apostle Paul says: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord, ...as the Church is subject to Christ...Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:22, 24, 25). In the same spirit, I call on each of you to answer.

The minister, calling the man by his Christian name, shall say:

Do you, N.______, take N.______ before God and these witnesses, to be your wedded wife?

The man shall answer:

I do.

Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking every other, keep to her only, so long as you both shall live?

Here the man shall answer:

I will.

The minister then, calling the woman by her Christian name, shall say:

Do you, N.______, take N.______, before God and these witnesses, to be your wedded husband?
The woman shall answer:

**I do.**

Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking every other, keep to him only, as long as you both shall live?

**Here the woman shall answer:**

**I will.**

*At this point the minister may ask:*

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

*The father, or guardian, of the woman may respond with “I do.” The minister shall then bid the man to take the right hand of the woman and to say after him:*

*I, N.______, take you, N.______, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God’s holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge myself truly with all my heart.*

*Then they shall loose their hands; and the woman, with her right hand taking the man by his right hand, shall likewise say after the minister:*

*I, N.______, take you, N.______, as my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us to part, according to God’s holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge myself truly with all my heart.*

*When a ring is used, the minister shall ask:*

What token do you give of this your marriage vow?

*The minister, having received the ring and given it to the man, shall bid him say:*

This ring I give in token of the covenant made this day between us; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
With this ring I thee wed; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If the woman also gives a ring, she shall present it in the same manner.

The minister shall now bid them join right hands and declare:

Declaration

Forasmuch as you, N____ and N____, have covenanted together according to God’s holy ordinance of marriage, and have confirmed the same by making solemn vows before God and this company and by joining hands (and by giving and receiving a ring), I pronounce you husband and wife; in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Hereafter the minister, addressing the congregation, shall say:

What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Amen.

Scripture

The minister may use the following Scripture or proceed directly to the Prayer.

Hear what the Word of God says concerning Christian love:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. I Corinthians 13:4-7

Beloved,... love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. I John 4:7-9

The minister, asking the man and woman to kneel, may use the following or another prayer.
Prayer

Let us pray.

O faithful God, who keepest covenant and truth with them that love thee, hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place, the marriage vow which thy servants, N____ and N_____, have vowed with thee. Grant to them the grace of thy good Spirit, that with all fidelity they may observe and keep it; walking together in thy faith and fear, being led by the angel of thy presence and strengthened by thy hand, until they come into the inheritance of the saints in light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has commanded us to pray, saying:

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, forever. Amen.

The minister shall pronounce over them one of the following benedictions:

Benediction

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

Or,

The Lord bless you and keep you:
The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Or,

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.
**ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN BURIAL:**
**A SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION**

The Order for Christian Burial should be conducted in the church among the gathered people of God. The casket should be closed before the service and thereafter remain closed. It may be covered with a white pall, a baptismal symbol recalling the robe of righteousness that covers the redeemed who stand before God (Revelation 7:9). The use of a pall is also a reminder that all are equal before God.

The minister begins with the votum and continues with one or more sentences.

**VOTUM**

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen.

*Psalm 124:8*

Or

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**SENTENCES**

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

*Matthew 11:28-29*

Or

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

*John 11:25-26*
We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.

*Romans 14:7-8*

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

*Job 1:21*

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

*John 14:27*

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

*Psalm 34:18*

The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

*Psalm 34:22*

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”

*Psalm 91:1-2*
Or

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:3-5

SALUTATION

Grace be to you and peace, from [God] who is and who was and who is to come… and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:4-5

Or

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter 1:2

A psalm or hymn of praise may be said or sung.

The minister continues:

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The minister may make a statement of purpose in these or similar words:

We are gathered here to praise God, to witness to our faith, and to give thanks for the life of our sister/brother N_____.

We come together in grief, acknowledging our loss. May God grant us grace
that in pain—we may find comfort,
in sorrow—hope,
and in death—resurrection.
Dying, Christ destroyed our death.
Rising, Christ restores our life.
In baptism, N____ was sealed by the Holy Spirit
and marked as Christ’s own forever.

Or

We gather in God’s presence
to remember and give thanks for the life of N____,
to affirm God’s love for us,
and to support one another in a time of need.
Let us acknowledge our grief
and be open in our love,
affirming the meaning and mystery of life,
confident in the hope of the resurrection
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER FOR COMFORT AND ILLUMINATION

Let us pray:

Most merciful God,
the consolation of the sorrowful
and the support of the weary,
who does not willingly grieve your children,
look down in tender love and pity,
we pray, on these your servants,
whose joy is turned into mourning.
According to the multitude of your mercies,
uphold, strengthen, and comfort them,
that they may not faint under this trial,
but find strength and a refuge in you.

Almighty God,
illumine us now through your Word,
so that hearing your promises,
we may be lifted out of darkness and distress
into the light and peace of your presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Or

God our Comforter,
you are our refuge and strength,
a helper close at hand in times of distress.
You forgive what we have done
and what we have left undone;
your mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.
Help us so to hear the words of our faith
that our fear is dispelled,
our loneliness eased, and our hope reawakened.
May your Holy Spirit lift us
above our natural sorrow,
to the peace and light of your constant love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PSALTER READINGS

One or more of the following selections of the Psalms may be read:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—they shall stumble and fall.
Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.
One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.
For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.
I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!

Psalm 27:1-5, 13-14

Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
You have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.
Surely everyone stands as a mere breath.
Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
they heap up, and do not know who will gather.
And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in you.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry;
do not hold your peace at my tears.

Psalm 39:4-7, 12a

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
his utters his voice, the earth melts.
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.
Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalm 46
For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress;  
I shall never be shaken.

Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.  

Psalm 62:1-2, 8

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!  
My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.  
Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young, at your altars,  
O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.  
Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.  
Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.  
As they go through the valley of Baca  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.  
They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.  
O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;  
give ear, O God of Jacob!  
Behold our shield, O God;  
look on the face of your anointed.  
For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.  
For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
he bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.  
O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.  

Psalm 84

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.  
You turn us back to dust, and say, “Turn back, you mortals.”  
For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past,  
or like a watch in the night.

Christian Burial
You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Who considers the power of your anger? Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.

Psalm 90:1-6, 10-12

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.

As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.
and his righteousness to children’s children,
to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

*Psalm 103:1-5, 8-18*

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

*Psalm 121*

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!
If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord,
who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

*Psalm 130*

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night;”
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24

The Gloria Patri or other ascription of praise shall be sung or said.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.
For everything there is a season, 
and a time for every matter under heaven: 
a time to be born, and a time to die; 
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 
a time to kill, and a time to heal; 
a time to break down, and a time to build up; 
a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; 
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 
a time to seek, and a time to lose; 
a time to keep, and a time to throw away; 
a time to tear, and a time to sew; 
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 
a time to love, and a time to hate; 
a time for war, and a time for peace. 
What gain have the workers from their toil? 
I have seen the business that God has 
given to everyone to be busy with.

He has made everything suitable for its time; 
moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, 
yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 
I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy 
and enjoy themselves as long as they live; 
moreover, it is God’s gift 
that all should eat and drink 
and take pleasure in all their toil. 
I know that whatever God does 
endures forever; 
nothing can be added to it, 
or anything taken from it; 
God has done this, so that all 
should stand in awe before him. 
That which is, already has been; 
that which is to be, already is; 
and God seeks out what has gone by.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

On this mountain the Lord of hosts 
will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, 
a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow,
of well-aged wines strained clear.
And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.
Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.
It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God;
we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Isaiah 25:6-9

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.
A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”
A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?”
All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.
Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem,
herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”
See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:1-11, 28-31

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you,
O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.

Isaiah 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.
Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-13

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Isaiah 65:17-25

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Isaiah 65:17-25

CHRISTIAN BURIAL
See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.” For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

Jeremiah 31:8-13

EPISTLE AND APOCALYPTIC READINGS

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:18, 28, 31-39

And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:37-38, 42-44a, 51-58

CHRISTIAN BURIAL
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation,
who consoles us in all our affliction,
so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction
with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3, 4

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair;
persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;
always carrying in the body the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.
For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake,
so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.
So death is at work in us, but life in you.
But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—
‘I believed, and so I spoke’—
we also believe, and so we speak,
because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus
will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence.
Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace,
as it extends to more and more people,
may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.
So we do not lose heart.
Even though our outer nature is wasting away,
our inner nature is being renewed day by day.
For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us
for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,
because we look not at what can be seen
but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary,
but what cannot be seen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:8-18

If then there is any encouragement in Christ,
any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit,
any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete:
be of the same mind, having the same love,
being in full accord and of one mind.
Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,
but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.
Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.
Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited, but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:1-11

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters,
about those who have died,
so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.
For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.
For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord,
that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord,
will by no means precede those who have died.
For the Lord himself, with a cry of command,
with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet,
will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
Then we who are alive, who are left,
will be caught up in the clouds together with them
to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.
Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Therefore, since we are surrounded
by so great a cloud of witnesses,
let us also lay aside every weight
and the sin that clings so closely,
and let us run with perseverance
the race that is set before us,
looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith,

Christian Burial
who for the sake of the joy that was set before him
endured the cross,
disregarding its shame,
and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,
kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God
through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while
you have had to suffer various trials,
so that the genuineness of your faith—
being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—
may be found to result in praise and glory and honor
when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him;
and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him
and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,
for you are receiving the outcome of your faith,
the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count,
from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,
standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white,
with palm branches in their hands.
They cried out in a loud voice, saying,
“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”
And all the angels stood around the throne
and around the elders and the four living creatures,
and they fell on their faces before the throne
and worshipped God, singing, “Amen!
Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”
Then one of the elders addressed me, saying,
“Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?”
I said to him, “Sir, you are the one that knows.”
Then he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal;
they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
For this reason they are before the throne of God,
and worship him day and night within his temple,
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.
They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:9-17

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.
And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.”

Revelation 21:1-4

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal,
flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb
through the middle of the street of the city.
On either side of the river is the tree of life
with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month;
and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
Nothing accursed will be found there any more.
But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it,
and his servants will worship him;
they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.
And there will be no more night;
they need no light of lamp or sun,
for the Lord God will be their light,
and they will reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:1-5

Christian Burial
GOSPEL READINGS

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 6:25-33

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

Mark 16:1-7
But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Luke 24:1-9, 36-43

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.

CHRISTIAN BURIAL
who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh
or of the will of man, but of God.
And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

*John 1:1-5, 9-14*

Then Jesus said to them,
“Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven,
but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.
For the bread of God is that which
comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”
They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”
Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.
But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.
Everything that the Father gives me will come to me,
and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away;
for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will,
but the will of him who sent me.
And this is the will of him who sent me,
that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me,
but raise it up on the last day.
This is indeed the will of my Father,
that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life;
and I will raise them up on the last day.
Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.
I am the bread of life.
Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.
This is the bread that comes down from heaven,
so that one may eat of it and not die.
I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever;
and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

*John 6:32-40, 47-51*

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God, believe also in me.
In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places.
If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again
and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.
And you know the way to the place where I am going.”
Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”
Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 14:1-6

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

John 14:15-20

“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

John 14:25-27

“Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

John 17:24

“This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

John 6:40

CHRISTIAN BURIAL
At the death of a child:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16

At the conclusion of the reading of the Gospel the minister may say:

Believe this Gospel and live in peace.
SERMON

A brief sermon shall be preached.

Following the sermon a psalm or hymn may be said or sung.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us confess the faith of our baptism, as we say:

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.

Or

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, died, 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.

CHRISTIAN BURIAL
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.

Q: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A: That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

Christ has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1

Or

God saves the world through Jesus. Those who call on that name will have life. Christ’s hand reaches out beyond those who say “Lord” to the infants who live in the atmosphere of faith, even to the farthest stars and planets—all creation. The boundaries of God’s love are not known, the Spirit works at the ends of the world before the church has there spoken a word.

God will renew the world through Jesus, who will put all unrighteousness out, purify the works of human hands, and perfect their fellowship in divine love. Christ will wipe away every tear;
death shall be no more.
There will be a new heaven and a new earth,
and all creation will be filled with God’s glory.

Come, Lord Jesus:
We are open to your Spirit.
We await your full presence.
Our world finds rest in you alone.

Our Song of Hope, VII

REMEMBRANCE

The minister or friend/s or member/s of the family of the deceased may offer thanksgiving for the one who has died if this has not been included in the sermon.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Let us pray.

O God,
before whom generations rise and pass away,
we praise you for all your servants
who, having lived this life in faith,
now live eternally with you.

Especially we thank you for your servant N_____
We praise you for the gift of his/her life,
for all in him/her that was good and kind and faithful.
We thank you for the grace you gave him/her,
that kindled in him/her a love for you,
and enabled him/her to serve you faithfully.

Here mention may be made of the person’s characteristics or service.

We thank you that for N_____ death is past and pain ended,
and that he/she has now entered the joy you have prepared;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
in whose name we are bold to pray:

Or
Eternal and ever-merciful God,
whose blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord
has triumphed over sin and death and the grave,
we praise and bless your name
for the life and immortality
that have been brought to light in the gospel.
We glorify you, that he,
having destroyed the power of death,
opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers,
and that, because he lives, we shall live also.
Even now, having peace with you through him,
we rejoice in the hope of your glory.
Thanks be to you, O God, who gives us the victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
look in tender love and compassion on your sorrowing servants.
Enable them to find in you their refuge and strength,
a very present help in time of trouble;
and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.
Grant them faith and hope in him who by death has conquered death,
and by rising opened the gates of eternal life.

Ever-blessed God,
we give you thanks for all the generations of the faithful,
who, having served you here in godliness and love,
are now with you in glory.
We praise you especially for him/her
whom you have now taken to yourself,
this pilgrim now come to the heavenly city.
For all your loving kindness toward him/her
throughout his/her earthly life we give you thanks;
for all that he/she was, by nature and by grace,
to those who loved him/her and to the church of your dear Son.
We thank you that his/her trials and temptations being ended,
sickness and death being passed,
he/she has now entered into the rest that remains for your people.
Seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,
enable us, O God,
to lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely,
and to run with perseverance the race that is set before us,
looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.
Keep us in unbroken fellowship with the church in heaven;
enrich our souls in those things
over which darkness and death
no longer have any dominion;
and bring us at last, with all the faithful in Christ,
to the eternal peace and joy of your presence;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or

O God,
from the dawn of the first day you have cared for your people.
By your hand we were created;
in your hand we live;
and to your hand we return again.
You have revealed yourself in many ways,
until, in the fullness of time,
your word was made flesh and dwelt among us
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
In his life, death, and resurrection
we find our calling in this world
and our hope for the world to come.

We give you thanks for your servants,
who, having lived this life in faith,
will live eternally with you.
We especially thank you for N_____,
for the gift of his/her life,
for the grace you have given him/her,
for all in him/her that was good and kind and faithful.

Here mention may be made of attributes or service.

We thank you that for N_____ death is past, pain is ended,
and he/she has entered the joy you have prepared
in the company of all the saints.

Give us faith to look beyond touch and sight,
and in seeing that we are surrounded
by so great a cloud of witnesses,
enable us to run with perseverance the race
that is set before us,
looking to Jesus,
the author and finisher of our faith.
Bring us at last to your eternal peace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
in whose name we are bold 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 for ever. Amen.

Or

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.

COMMENDATION

The minister, after moving to the head of the casket, continues, facing the body:

Let us pray.

Into your hands, O merciful Savior,
we commend your servant N________.
Acknowledge, we pray,  
a sheep of your own fold,  
a lamb of your own flock,  
a sinner of your own redeeming.  
Receive him/her into the arms of your mercy,  
into the blessed rest of everlasting peace,  
and into the glorious company of the saints in light.

If the service concludes here, a hymn may be sung and the benediction pronounced.

If the body is to be committed for burial, the service shall continue at the graveside.

THE ORDER FOR COMMITTAL

LESSON

I am the resurrection and the life.  
Those who believe in me,  
even though they die, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.  

John 11:25-26

I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The Lord is your keeper;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.  
The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Psalm 121
We do not live to ourselves,
and we do not die to ourselves.
If we live, we live to the Lord,
and if we die, we die to the Lord;
so then, whether we live or whether we die,
we are the Lord’s.
For to this end Christ died and lived again,
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

*Romans 14:7-9*

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.
And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.”

*Revelation 21:1-4*

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.

COMMITTAL

In sure and certain hope
of the resurrection to eternal life,
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
we commend to almighty God our brother/sister N______,
and we commit his/her body
to the ground/the deep/the elements/
this resting place/be cremated,
earth to earth,
ashes to ashes,
dust to dust.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, says the Spirit.
They rest from their labors,
and their works follow them.

Revelation 14:13, adapted

PRAYER

The minister continues:

Let us pray.

O God,
in the beginning you formed us from the dust of the earth
and breathed into us the breath of life.
So also, in the last days,
you have promised to raise us from the dust,
so we might assume a new body
at the coming of your Son.
For as in Adam all die,
so in Christ shall all be made alive.
We thank you for this hope,
that N______, who has died,
will be raised to life imperishable.

Christian Burial
Look down upon us with tender pity and compassion, 
grant each of us the comfort of your Spirit. 
Renew within us the joy of your salvation, 
through Jesus Christ our Lord, 
who lives and reigns with you 

Or

God of boundless compassion, 
our only sure comfort in life and in death: 
Look tenderly upon your children 
overwhelmed by loss and sorrow. 
Lighten our darkness with your presence 
and assure us of your love. 
Enable us to see beyond this place and time 
to your eternal kingdom, 
promised to all who love you, 
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or

Almighty God, 
by the death of your son Jesus Christ, 
you destroyed death; 
by his rest in the tomb, 
you sanctified the graves of the saints; 
and by his glorious resurrection 
you brought life and immortality to light.

Receive, we pray, our thanks for that victory over death, 
which Jesus obtained for us, 
and for all who rest in him. 
Keep us in eternal fellowship 
with all who wait for you on earth 
and with all who surround you in heaven; 
in union with Christ, 
who is the resurrection and the life, 
who lives and reigns with you 
and the Holy Spirit, 
ever one God, world without end. Amen.

CHRISTIAN BURIAL
At the committal of a child:

Loving God,
your Son our Savior
put his arms around the children and blessed them.
Give us grace to entrust N________
to your never-failing care and love,
and bring us all to your heavenly kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or

Loving God,
give us faith to believe,
though this child has died,
that you will welcome him/her,
and will care for him/her,
until by your mercy
we are together again in the joy of your promised kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

BENEDICTION

Now may the God of peace,
who brought from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,
by the blood of the eternal covenant,
make you complete in everything good
so that you may do his will,
working among us that which is pleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be glory forever and ever.

Hebrews 13:20, 21

And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be and abide with you always. Amen.

Or
The peace of God, 
which surpasses all understanding, 
guard your hearts and your minds 
in Christ Jesus. Amen.
The Order of Worship for Christian Burial should be conducted in the church, preferably at a time when the congregation can be present. The casket should be closed before the service and thereafter remain closed. It may be appropriate that it be covered with a pall or other suitable covering. If there are to be flowers at the church, they should be limited in number.

The Approach to God

VOTUM

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen.

Or,

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SENTENCES

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28-29

Or,

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. John 11:25-26

Or,

Another appropriate passage, such as Job 1:21; Romans 14:7-9; John 14:25-27

SALUTATION

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Or,
Grace to you and peace from him who is and was and who is to come, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.  

Revelation 1:4b-6

A Hymn may be sung or the service may proceed to the Confession or the Prayer of Illumination.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Eternal God, before whose face the generations rise and pass away, you formed us in your image and willed us to live before you in peace and love. We confess we are not the people you created or called us to be—we have not loved you with our whole heart or our neighbors as ourselves. Forgive our sin, O God, and create in us a new and willing spirit, so that in our living, we may serve you, and in our dying, enter the joy of your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and

Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

With everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Or,

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel: God is love, and in his love we are forgiven. Amen.

Or,
For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

*John 3:16, 17*

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ pardon all our sins. Amen.

**THE WORD OF GOD**

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our refuge and our strength, console and support those who are sorrowful through the comfort of your Word, so we might be confident in this and every time of need, trusting in your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Or,*

Almighty God, whose love never fails, and who can turn the shadow of death into the light of life, illumine us through your Word; so that hearing your promises, we may be lifted out of darkness and distress into the light and peace of your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**LESSONS**

*There will ordinarily be two or three lessons, one from the Old Testament, one from the portion of the New Testament other than the Gospels, and one from the Gospels.*

*Old Testament: Psalm 23; 27; 42:11-43; 5; 84:1-4, 8-12; 121*

*The reading may be followed by the Gloria Patri:*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.


BURIAL, 1987 3
SERMON

*A brief sermon may be preached. The focus of the sermon is the hope set before us in the Gospel: that in life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. It may also be appropriate to acknowledge this hope as it was manifested in the life of the one who has died in the faith.*

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Now to the one who is able to keep you from falling, to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. **Amen.**

*A Hymn may be sung.*

The Response to God

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Let us confess our Christian faith.

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 at 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.

Or,

What then shall we say to this?
If God is for us, who is against us?
Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness,
or peril or sword?
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
For I am sure that neither death, nor life, 
nor angels, nor principalities, 
not things present, nor things to come, 
nor powers, nor height, nor depth, 
not anything else in all creation, 
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31, 35, 37-39

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Let us pray.

O God, from the dawn of the first day you have cared for your people. By your hand we were created; in your hand we live; and to your hand we return again. You have revealed yourself in many and various way, until, in the fullness of time, your word was made flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. In his life, death, and resurrection we find our calling in this world and our hope for the world to come.

Therefore with your whole Church on earth and with all the company of heaven we worship and adore your glorious name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

O God, you understand our grief, for you have felt our pain. Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus, and the heavens were darkened when your own Son died upon the cross. Comfort us with the knowledge that Jesus raised his friend and will raise all who hear his voice, for he destroyed the darkness of death when you raised him to the light of Easter morn.

We give you thanks in this day for your servants, who, having lived this life in faith, now live eternally with you. Especially we thank you for N.____, for the gift of his her life, for the grace you have given him her, for all in him her that was good and kind and faithful. (Here mention may be made of attributes or service.) We thank you that for him her death is past, and pain is ended, and he she has entered the joy you have prepared in the company of all the saints.
Give us faith to look beyond touch and sight, and in seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, enable us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Bring us at last to your eternal peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we are bold to pray:

LORD’S PRAYER

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.

COMMENDATION

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant N._______.
Acknowledge, we pray, a sheep of your fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him her into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light.

Let us go forth in the name of Christ. Amen.

A Hymn may be sung.

If the body is to be committed for burial, the service shall continue at the grave.

The Committal

LESSONS

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die
in the Lord.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”  

Rev. 14:13

Or,

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.  

Psalm 121

Or,

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. God will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”  

Rev. 21:1-4

COMMITTAL

As the body is committed to the grave, earth may be cast upon the coffin by the minister and/or the family and friends of the deceased.

We have entrusted our brother sister, N.______, into the hands of God, and we now commit his her body to the ground deep elements this resting place, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord bless him her and keep him her, the Lord make his face to shine upon him her and be gracious unto him her, the Lord lift up his countenance upon him her and grant him her peace. Amen.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

O God, in the beginning you formed us from the dust of the earth and breathed into us the breath of life. So also, in these last days, you have promised to raise us from
the dust, so we might assume a new body at the coming of your Son. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. We thank you for this hope kindled within our hearts, that N.______, who has died, will in the twinkling of an eye be raised to life imperishable.

Look down with tender pity and compassion upon us in this day, and grant unto each of us the comfort of your spirit. Renew within us the gifts of faith, hope, and love, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be and abide with you always. Amen.
ORDER OF SERVICE
FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Services for the deceased faithful should be held in the church whenever possible. The casket should be closed before the service and thereafter remain closed. If there are to be flowers at the church, they should be limited to three or four pieces.

If the casket is in place, the service may begin with the Votum and Salutation. If the minister processes, as the casket is brought forward, the service shall begin with the Sentences. The Votum and Salutation must be used to open the service from the pulpit.

Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Salutation

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or,

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Sentences

Any of the following Sentences may be used:

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”

John 11:25-26

None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.

Romans 14:7-8
We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

_I Timothy 6:7_

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

_Job 1:21_

_Then the minister shall lead in prayer._

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Almighty and most merciful God, the consolation of the sorrowful and the support of the weary, who dost not willingly grieve or afflict the children of men, look down in tender love and pity, we pray thee, on thy servants, this bereaved household, whose joy is turned into mourning. According to the multitude of thy mercies, be pleased to uphold, strengthen, and comfort them, that they may not faint under this visitation, but find in thee their strength and refuge; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

**Psalms**

_One or more of the following selections of the Psalms may be read._

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
   he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
   he restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
   for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
   I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
   thy rod and thy staff,
they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
   in the presence of my enemies.
thou anointest my head with oil,
   my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of Lord
for ever.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
When evildoers assail me,
uttering slanders against me,
my adversaries and foes,
they shall stumble and fall.
Though a host encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me,
yet I will be confident.
One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after;
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent,
he will set me high upon a rock.
And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies round about me;
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.
Teach me thy way, O Lord;
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they breathe out violence.
I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!
Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!

Psalm 27:1-6, 11-14

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and be glad.
O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!
I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.
O taste and see that the Lord is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!
O fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no want!
The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.
The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 34:1-9, 18, 22

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.
He will bring forth your vindication as the light, and your right as the noonday.
Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over him who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!
The steps of a man are from the Lord, and he establishes him in whose way he delights; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord is the stay of his hand.
I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging bread.
He is ever giving liberally and lending, and his children become a blessing.
Depart from evil, and do good; so shall you abide for ever.
For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints.
The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their refuge in the time of trouble.
The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked, and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Psalm 37:3-7, 23-27, 39, 40

Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is!
Behold, thou hast made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in thy sight.
Surely every man stands as a mere breath!
Surely man goes about as a shadow!
Surely for nought are they in turmoil; man heaps up, and knows not who will gather!
And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in thee.
Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Make me not the scorn of the fool!
I am dumb, I do not open my mouth; for it is thou who has done it.
Remove thy stroke from me;
I am spent by the blows of thy hand.
When thou dost chasten man with rebukes for sin, though dost consume like a moth what is dear to him;
surely every man is a mere breath!

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
and give ear to my cry;
hold not thy peace at my tears!

For I am thy passing guest,
a sojourner, like all my fathers.
Look away from me, that I may know gladness,
before I depart and be no more!

Psalm 39:4-13

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God will help her right early.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge.
“Be still, and know that I am God.
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth!”
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalm 46:1-7, 10, 11

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly moved.

Psalm 62:1-2

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place
in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.
For a thousand years in thy sight
    are but as yesterday when it is past,
or as a watch in the night.
Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a dream,
    like grass which is renewed in the morning:
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.
The years of our life are threescore and ten,
or even by reason of strength fourscore;
yet their span is but toil and trouble;
    they are soon gone, and we fly away.
So teach us to number our days
    that we may get a heart of wisdom.
Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love,
    that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Make us glad as many days as thou hast afflicted us,
    and as many years as we have seen evil.
Let thy work be manifest to thy servants,
    and thy glorious power to their children.
Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
    and establish thou the work of our hands upon us,
yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Psalm 90:1, 2, 4-6, 10, 12, 14-17

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High,
who abides in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.”

Psalm 91:1, 2

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
    and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
    and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
    who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
    who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
    so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger for ever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

Psalm 103:1-5, 8-18

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and for evermore.

Psalm 121

Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord!
    Lord, hear my voice!
Let thy ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!
If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,
    Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee,
    that thou mayest be feared.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
    and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
    more than watchmen for the morning,
    more than watchmen for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord!
    For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
    and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he will redeem Israel
    from all his iniquities.

Psalm 130

O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me!
Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;
    thou discernest my thoughts from afar.
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
    and art acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
    lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.
Thou dost beset me behind and before,
    and layest thy hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
    it is high, I cannot attain it.
Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
    Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!
    If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!
If I take the wings of the morning
    and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there thy hand shall lead me, 
    and thy right hand shall hold me. 
If I say, “Let only darkness cover me, 
    and the light about me be night,”
even the darkness is not dark to thee, 
    the night is bright as the day; 
for darkness is as light with thee.
For thou didst form my inward parts, 
    thou didst knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. 
    Wonderful are thy works!
Thou knowest me right well; 
    my frame was not hidden from thee, 
when I was being made in secret, 
    intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.
Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; 
    in thy book were written, every one of them, 
the days that were formed for me, 
    when as yet there was none of them.
How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God! 
    How vast is the sum of them!
If I would count them, they are more than the sand. 
    When I awake, I am still with thee.
Search me, O God, and know my heart! 
    Try me and know my thoughts! 
And see if there be any wicked way in me, 
    and lead me in the way everlasting!

_Psalm 139:1-18, 23, 24_

*At the close of the reading of the Psalter, the minister shall say, or the congregation may sing, the*

**Gloria Patri**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. AMEN.

_Then the minister shall read from the New Testament, choosing one or more of the following passages, first from the Epistles and then from the Gospels, and before the reading let him say:*

Hear the Word of God as it is written in the New Testament.
Epistles

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8: 18, 28, 35, 37-39

And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks to be God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

I Corinthians 15:37-44a, 53-58

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

II Corinthians 1:3, 4
We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

II Corinthians 4:8-18

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy
we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.

I Peter 1:3-9

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.” Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night within his temple;
and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water;
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:9-17

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride
adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 21:1-4

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 22:1-5

Gospels

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.”

Mark 16:1-7

“Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes
to the Father, but by me.”

*John 14:1-6*

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

*John 14:15-20*

These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

*John 14:25-27*

Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.

*John 17:24*

For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

*John 6:40*

At the conclusion of the reading of the Gospel the minister may say:

Believe this Gospel and go forth to live in peace.

**Confession of Faith**

*The Creed may be used here or at the commital service.*

Let us make confession of our Faith, in the words of the Apostles’ (or Nicene) 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.

Or,

We believe in one God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds; God of God, light of light, very God of very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven; and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Ghost; the Lord and giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy Catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Hymn

A suitable hymn, anthem, or solo may be sung.
The minister may preach a brief sermon bearing testimony to the hope and promises set forth in Scripture, and may conclude with an ascription of praise.

Prayers of thanksgiving for the Christian Gospel and the Blessed Hope, for the light of the Gospel as displayed in this life, and for the comfort of the family, may then be made. The following prayers may be used.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Eternal and ever-merciful God, whose blessed Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, has triumphed over sin and death and the grave, we praise and bless thy name for the life and immortality which have been brought to light in the Gospel. We glorify thee that he, having destroyed the power of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and that, because he lives, we shall live also. Even now, having peace with thee through him, we rejoice in the hope of thy glory. Thanks be to thee, O God, who givest us the victory; through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father of mercies and God of all comfort, look in thy tender love and pity, we pray thee, on thy sorrowing servants. Enable them to find in thee their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Grant them faith and hope in him who by death has conquered death, and by rising again has opened the gates of eternal life, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ever-blessed God, we give thee thanks for all the generations of the faithful, who, having served thee here in godliness and love, are now with thee in glory. We praise thee especially for him whom thou hast now taken to thyself, this pilgrim now come to the heavenly city. For all thy loving-kindness toward him throughout his earthly life we give thee thanks; for all that he was, by nature and by grace, to those who loved him and to the Church of thy dear Son. We thank thee that, his trials and temptations being ended, sickness and death being passed, he has now entered into the rest that remains for thy people. Seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, enable us, O God, to lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Keep us in unbroken fellowship with the Church in heaven; enrich our souls in those things over
which darkness and death no longer have any dominion; and bring us at last, with all the faithful in Christ, to the eternal peace and joy of the presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord; in whose name we are bold to say:

**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, forever. Amen.**

*Then a hymn may be sung.*

**Benediction**
ORDER FOR COMMITTAL
SERVICE FOR AN ADULT

Standing near the head of the casket, or having reached the place of burial, the minister will use one or more of the following Sentences:

Sentences

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

*John 11:25, 26*

None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

*Romans 14:7-9*

We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

*I Timothy 6:7*

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

*Job 1:21*

Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee.

*Isaiah 26:3*

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

*II Corinthians 5:1*

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.”

*Revelation 14:13*

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since
we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

*I Thessalonians 4:13, 14*

**Apostles’ Creed**

*Then the minister may lead in the confession of the Christian Faith, if he has not done so previously, saying:*

Let us make confession of our Faith, as expressed in 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.**

*Then the minister shall say:*

To almighty God we commend this servant, _____________, looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose coming again in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like unto his glorious body; according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who, by the death of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, hast destroyed death; by his rest in the tomb hast sanctified the graves of the saints; and by his glorious resurrection hast brought life and immortality to light; receive, we pray thee, our humble thanks for that victory over death and the
grave, which he has obtained for us, and for all who sleep in him; and keep
us in eternal fellowship with all those who wait for thee on earth and with
all those who surround thee in heaven; in union with him who is the Res-
urrection and the Life; who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit
ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, grant, we pray thee, that we who are
still to continue our course amidst earthly dangers, temptation, and troubles
may evermore be protected by thy mercy, and finally come to the haven of
eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we are
bold to say:

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

Benediction

Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the
great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you
with every thing good that you may do his will, working in you that which
is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and
ever. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be and
abide with you always. Amen.
ORDER OF SERVICE FOR
THE BURIAL OF A CHILD

Services for children of the faithful should be held in the church whenever possible. The casket should be closed before the service and thereafter remain closed. If there are to be flowers at the church, they should be limited to three or four pieces.

If the casket is in place, the service may begin with the Votum and Salutation. If the minister processes as the casket is brought forward, the service shall begin with the Sentences. The Votum and Salutation must be used to open the service from the pulpit.

Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Salutation

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sentences

Any of the following Sentences may be used:

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”

John 11:25

He will feed his flock like a shepherd,
    he will gather the lambs in his arms,
he will carry them in his bosom,
    and gently lead those that are with young.

Isaiah 40:11

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matthew 5:8

BURIAL OF A CHILD, 1968
As a father pities his children, 
so the Lord pities those who fear him.  

_Psalm 103:13_

Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. 

_John 14:1_

_Then the minister shall lead in prayer._

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our heavenly Father, who loveth us with an everlasting love, 
and canst turn the shadow of death into the morning, help us now to wait 
upon thee with reverent and submissive hearts; that, as we read the words 
of eternal life, we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have 
hope, and be lifted above our darkness and distress into the light and peace 
of thy presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Psalms**

_One or more of the following selections of the Psalms may be read:_

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; 
he makes me lie down in green pastures. 
He leads me beside still waters; 
he restores my soul. 
He leads me in paths of righteousness 
for his name’s sake. 
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, 
I fear no evil; 
for thou art with me; 
thy rod and thy staff, 
they comfort me. 
Thou preparest a table before me 
in the presence of my enemies. 
thou anointest my head with oil, 
my cup overflows. 
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me 
all the days of my life; 
and I shall dwell in the house of Lord forever. 

_Psalm 23_
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits,  
who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the Pit,  
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,  
who satisfies you with good as long as you live  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,  
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor requite us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father pities his children,  
so the Lord pities those who fear him.
For he knows our frame;  
he remembers that we are dust.
As for man, his days are like grass;  
he flourishes like a flower of the field;  
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,  
and its place knows it no more.
But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting  
upon those who fear him,  
and his righteousness to children’s children,  
to those who keep his covenant  
and remember to do his commandments.

Psalm 103:1-5, 8-18

I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
From whence does my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot be moved,  
he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel
    will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
    the Lord is your shade
  on your right hand.
The sun shall not smite you by day,
    nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
    he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
  your going out and your coming in
  from this time forth and for evermore.

Psalm 121

Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord!
    Lord, hear my voice!
Let thy ears be attentive
    to the voice of my supplications!
If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,
    Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee,
    that thou mayest be feared.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
    and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
    more than watchmen for the morning,
    more than watchmen for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord!
    For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
    and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he will redeem Israel
    from all his iniquities.

Psalm 130

At the close of the reading of the Psalter, the minister shall say, or the congrega-
tion may sing, the

Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the
beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. AMEN.
Epistles and Gospels

Then the minister shall read from the New Testament, choosing one or more of the following passages. Before the reading let him say:

Hear the Word of God as it is written in the New Testament.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, 
   and serve him day and night within his temple; 
   and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. 
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; 
   the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, 
   and he will guide them to springs of living water; 
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:15-17

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 18:1-4

And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Mark 10:13-16

“Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.”

John 14:1-6

BURIAL OF A CHILD, 1968  5
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.  

*John 14:27*

*At the conclusion of the reading, the minister may say:*

Believe this Gospel and go forth to live in peace.

**Hymn**

*A suitable hymn, anthem, or solo may be sung.*

**Sermon**

*The minister may preach a brief sermon bearing testimony to the hope and promises set forth in Scripture, and may conclude with an ascription of praise.*

*Prayers of thanksgiving for the Christian Gospel and the Blessed Hope, for the light of the Gospel as displayed in this life, and for the comfort of the family, may then be read. The following prayers may be used.*

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Most loving Father, whose ears are open to the cry of thy children, and who art nearest to us when we are most in need of thee, to thee do we turn in this hour of sorrow, knowing thy love to us, trusting in thy perfect wisdom, and seeking grace to say from the heart, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

We bless and praise thy name for the gift of this child whom thou hast taken, for the precious memories of *him* that will always abide; and for our assurance that for *him* all sickness and sorrow are ended, that death itself is past, and that *he* lives evermore in thy presence, wherein is fullness of joy.

O God whose Son took little children in his arms and laid his hands upon them, and blessed them, make us to know that thou hast called this child to thyself, and that thou wilt keep *him*, now and always in the arms of thy love.

O God, who healest the broken hearts, and bindest up their wounds, look down in tender pity and compassion on thy servants whose joy has been turned into mourning. Leave them not comfortless, but grant that they may
be drawn closer to one another by their common sorrow. As thou hast given them this new tie to bind them to the world unseen, so grant to them that where their treasure is, there may their hearts be also. Fill their souls with the light and comfort of thy presence. Grant to them such a vision of that life wherein all mysteries shall be revealed, and all tears wiped away, that they may be able to endure as seeing thee who art invisible. So dwell with them and be their God, until the day break and the shadows flee away; through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we are bold to say:

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, forever. Amen.

A hymn may then be sung.

Benediction
ORDER FOR COMMITTAL SERVICE FOR A CHILD

Standing near the head of the casket, or, having reached the place of committal, the minister will use one or more of the following Sentences:

**Sentences**

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

*John 11:25*

We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

*I Timothy 6:7*

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

*Job 1:21b*

Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee.

*Isaiah 26:3*

The eternal God is your dwelling place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms.

*Deuteronomy 33:27a*

*Then the minister shall say:*

To almighty God we commend this child, looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through Jesus Christ; at whose second coming again in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed and made like unto his glorious body; according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

**Prayer**

Let us pray.
O God, our heavenly Father, who hast taught us that the angels of the little ones do always behold thy face in heaven, open our eyes, we pray, that we may perceive that thou hast now taken this child into the arms of thy love, and that thy mercy endures forever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

_Then the minister shall say:_

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

_1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14_

**Benediction**

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be and abide with you always. Amen.
In the loss of an infant parents and loved ones experience deep spiritual and psychological needs. The importance of a funeral service as an aid in the grief process and as an affirmation of Christian hope cannot be overestimated. Parents and family may wish to have an abbreviated private service at the hospital or home, or may wish to share with the church family at a church funeral.

Laws regarding registration of fetuses and disposal of the body vary from state to state, and families should check with hospital administration and funeral directors before making final decisions about disposing of the body.

The immediate pastoral concern is for the parents of the child. The pastor can help provide an atmosphere of acceptance and love where parents are encouraged to express their feelings.

If the fetus is full or close to term, the parents should be encouraged to hold the child, name it, and speak of it as a person. This may seem very hard at the time, but opportunity for this should be allowed.

Parents may experience shame and guilt and may seek answers where there are no answers. Support from the family, hospital staff, and pastor are important as parents begin the grief process. Grieving cannot be hurried, and support needs to be offered through the long weeks and months that follow the death. Pastoral support will also be needed if there are subsequent pregnancies and births. Support groups for those who have lost a child at birth can also offer help. Hospital administrators, doctors and mid-wives, and other clergy can make helpful suggestions about support groups in the area.

*All who are able please stand.

*Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.
*Sentences*

Praise the Lord
The Lord’s name be praised.

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.
If anyone believes in me,
even though that person die,
so shall that person live.
And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.
“Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened,
and I will give you rest.”
Grace to you and peace.

(The leader may touch the parents’ heads in blessing.)

*Hymn* (Optional)

**The Naming of the Child** (At the discretion of the family)

The leader says:

What name do you give your child?

The parent(s) respond:

We name him/her ___________.

(The parents may give the significance of the name.)

**The Lessons**

Some of the following lessons may be read, including one from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles, and one from the Gospels:

THE PSALMS

Ps. 23 The Lord is my shepherd.
Ps. 27 The Lord is my light and my salvation.
Ps. 30:1-5 I cried to you for help.
Ps. 42 Hope in God, for I shall again praise him.
Ps. 46 God is our refuge and strength.
Ps. 84 How lovely is your dwelling place.
Ps. 90 Lord, you have been our dwelling place.
Ps. 103:1-5, 8-18 Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Ps. 118 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
Ps. 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills.
Ps. 130 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
Ps. 139 O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

2 Sam. 12:16-23 David and the death of his child.
2 Sam. 18:32–19:2 Absolom’s death.
Isa. 35:1-10 Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
Isa. 40:11 He will feed his flock.
Isa. 49:8-13 For the Lord... will have compassion.
Jer. 31:15 Rachel is weeping for her children.
Lam. 3:22-26, 31-33 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

THE EPISTLES

Rom. 8:18-25 The creation waits with eager longing.
Rom. 8:26-31 If God is for us, who is against us?
Rom. 14:7, 8 We do not live to ourselves.
I Thess. 4:13-18 We do not want you to be uninformed about those who have died.
I John 3:1-2 See what love the Father has given us.

THE GOSPEL

Matt. 5:1-12 The Beatitudes
Matt. 11:28-30 Come to me, all you that are weary.
Matt. 18:1-4 Unless you become like children.
Mark 10:13-16 Let the little children come to me.
John 14:1-6 Do not let your hearts be troubled.
John 14:27 Peace I leave with you.

The Prayers

O God who loves us as a perfect Parent, your words have brought comfort and strength to your people through the ages.
Confirm to us also the truth of your promises, that we might receive the strength and peace we need. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of eternal comfort, you alone can heal our broken hearts. You alone can wipe away our tears. You alone can give us the peace we need. You alone can give us the strength to carry on. We ask you to be near to those whose time of joy has been turned into sadness. Awaken us to your presence. encourage us by your strength, and may our love for one another be deepened by the knowledge of your love for us all. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The following prayers may be used if the child was near or full term.

Lord Jesus Christ, you took little children into your arms and you laid your hands upon them and blessed them. Assure us that you have taken our child \( N \) into your arms and into your care, and that together we are enfolded in your love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Creator and Keeper of Life, we acknowledge that our child \( N \) is your child, loved since before the foundation of the world. Grant us such trust in the finished work of Christ our Savior that we shall look with hope toward a full knowledge of this child \( N \), whose earthly life we have shared but little, and whom we entrust to your care. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF COMMENDATION

We commend this child \( N \) to your safekeeping. Grant \( him/her \) rest eternal, and bring us all into the light and peace of your presence. Amen.
THE COMMITTAL (may be omitted)

We entrust this child \( N \) into the hands of God, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, having our whole trust and confidence in the mercy of our God, and in the victory of Jesus Christ our Lord, who died, was buried, and rose again for us, and who is alive and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER (in unison)

*Hymn* (optional)

*Benediction*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God be with you always. Amen.

**Suggested Hymns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>TUNES</th>
<th>RIL 1</th>
<th>HB 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All My Hope</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of the Heavenly Father</td>
<td>Tryggare Kan</td>
<td>585</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ingen Vara</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How Blest Are They</td>
<td>Tallis Canon</td>
<td>591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I to the Hills</td>
<td>Dundee</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Thou But Trust</td>
<td>Neumark</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Loves Me</td>
<td>Jesus Loves Me</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King of Love</td>
<td>St. Columba</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King of Love My Shepherd Is</td>
<td>Dominus Regit Me</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord of All Hopefulness</td>
<td>Slane</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>(Psalter Hymnal 558)</em></td>
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<td>Lord of the Living</td>
<td>Christe Sanctorum</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>(Presbyterian Hymnal 529)</em></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>O Lord of Life</td>
<td>Gelobt Sei Gott</td>
<td>592</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Lord’s My Shepherd</td>
<td>Brother James’ Air</td>
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<td><em>(Psalter Hymnal 161)</em></td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>The Lord’s My Shepherd</td>
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<td>89</td>
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</tbody>
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The Lord’s My Shepherd  Evan  104
My Shepherd Is the Living Lord  Glen  91
Our Lives are Filled with Sorrow  Es Kommt Ein Schiff  Geladen (Psalter Hymnal 491)

NOTES:


ORDER OF SERVICE FOR BURIAL
FOR ONE WHO HAS
LIVED APART FROM THE CHURCH

Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Salutation

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sentences

Any of the following Sentences may be used:

All flesh is grass
    and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
    when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
    but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Isaiah 40:6b, 7, 8

For the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance,
but the Lord looks on the heart.

I Samuel 16:7b

I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.

II Samuel 12:23c

Lord, thou has been our dwelling place
    in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.

Psalm 90:1, 2
God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear.  

_Psalm 46:1, 2a_

_Then the minister shall lead in prayer._

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our heavenly Father, who loveth us with an everlasting love,  
and canst turn the shadow of death into the morning, help us now to wait  
upon thee with reverent and submissive hearts, that as we read the words  
of eternal life, we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have  
hope, and be lifted above our darkness and distress into the light and peace  
of thy presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Psalms**

_One or more of the following selections of the Psalms may be read._

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;  
God will help her right early.  
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.  
The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.  

_Psalm 46:4-7_

Be still, and know that I am God.  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth!  
The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.  

_Psalm 46:10, 11_

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place  
in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a dream, like grass which is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad as many days as thou hast afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil.

Let thy work be manifest to thy servants, and thy glorious power to their children.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.

For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

Psalm 90:1, 2, 4-6, 10, 12, 14-17

Psalm 103:13-18
Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord!
    Lord, hear my voice!
Let thy ears be attentive
    to the voice of my supplications!
If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,
    Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee,
    that thou mayest be feared.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
    and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
    more than watchmen for the morning,
    more than watchmen for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord!
    For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
    and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he will redeem Israel
    from all his iniquities.

_Psalm 130_

_At the close of the reading of the Psalter, the minister shall say, or the congregation may sing, the_

_Gloria Patri_

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

_Scripture_

_Then the minister shall read from the Scripture, choosing one or more of the following passages. Before the reading, let him say:_

Hear the Word of God.

Why to you say, O Jacob,
    and speak, O Israel,
“My way is hid from the Lord,
    and my right is disregarded by my God”?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
The Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary,  
  his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint,  
  and to him who has no might he increases strength.  
Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
  and young men shall fall exhausted;  
but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
  they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
  they shall walk and not faint.

_Isaiah 40:27-31_

Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, while it is said, “Today, when you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

_Hebrews 3:12-15_

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

_Hebrews 4:11-16_

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Even so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.
Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.” Even so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.  

Luke 15:4-10

At the conclusion of the reading of the Scripture, the minister may say:

Believe this Gospel and go forth to live in peace.

Hymn

A suitable hymn, anthem, or solo may be sung.

Sermon

The minister may preach a brief sermon bearing testimony to the hope and promises set forth in Scripture, and may conclude with an ascription of praise.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who sees not as man sees, neither judges as man judges, we give thee thanks for all that was worthy in the life of him who has now passed from this world. We praise thee for every deed of kindness, every word of affection, and every useful labor of this one departed from this life. Since it is through thy mercy alone that we are not cut off, and by thy grace that we are saved, we pray thee so to impress our hearts with a sense of sinfulness and our need of thy forgiveness that, earnestly desiring the best gifts, we may henceforth walk humbly before thee and serve thee in faith, hope, and love; until the day break and the shadows flee away; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered, make us, we pray thee, deeply sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. Let thy Holy Spirit lead us in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives, that, when we shall have served thee in our generation, we may be gathered to our fathers, having the testimony of a good conscience; in the communion of thy Church; in the confidence of
a certain faith, in the comfort of a Christian and holy hope; in favor with thee, our God; and in perfect charity with the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we conclude our prayers, saying:

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, forever. Amen.

Benediction
COMMITTAL SERVICE FOR ONE WHO HAS LIVED APART FROM THE CHURCH

Standing near the head of the casket, or having reached the place of burial, the minister shall say:

In the midst of life, we are in death;
What helper do we have but thee, O Lord,
Who, because of our sins, art justly displeased?
Yet, O Lord God most holy, compassionate Savior,
Give us not over to bitter death.

The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth. Until that day of the glorious revelation of the great God and our Savior, we commit this body to the grave.

Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us and grant us thy peace.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who in thy perfect wisdom and mercy, hast ended for thy departed servant the voyage of this troubled life; grant, we pray thee, that we who are still to continue our course amidst earthly dangers, temptations, and troubles may evermore be protected by thy mercy and finally come to the haven of eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you:
The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
ORDER FOR THE ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

The ecclesiastical duties of elders and deacons are set forth in the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*, Chapter 1, Part I, Articles 1-6. These shall be made known to the congregation prior to election to office and these office holders shall acquaint themselves therewith.

The *BCO* (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 15) directs that the names of elders- and deacons-elect shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays preceding their installation in order that the board of elders may consider legitimate objections.

Elders and deacons may be reelected, but shall not be reordained. When reelected the following order shall be used as an installation.

After the sermon and the prayer for blessing on the Word, as part of the Response to God, the presiding minister shall begin:

PRESENTATION

Beloved in the Lord,
we have come to ordain and install elders and deacons
in Christ’s holy church.
Christ alone is the source of all Christian ministry,
through the ages calling men and women 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 Christ’s resurrection and ascension,
God has given the church
apostles, prophets, and teachers,
deeds of power, gifts of healing,
forms of assistance and leadership.

We stand within a tradition where God calls and empowers
deacons, elders, and ministers of Word and sacrament.
The elder vice president of consistory invites the candidates forward, saying:

This congregation has elected the following people
to the offices of deacon and elder:

NN/s *(using full names)*,
to be ordained and installed to the Office of Deacon;

NN/s ___________________________________________,
to be ordained and installed to the Office of Elder;

NN/s ___________________________________________,
to be installed as deacon;

and NN/s ______________________________________,
to be installed as elder.

The candidates shall remain standing; the presiding minister continues:

Deacons and elders are called to serve as Christ served.
We look to them to be people of
spiritual commitment, exemplary life,
compassionate spirit, and sound judgment.

Deacons are set apart for a ministry of mercy, service, and outreach.
They gather gifts and offerings,
care for them faithfully,
and distribute them with wisdom and compassion
to persons in need
and for purposes that advance God’s kingdom on earth.
Deacons visit and comfort the distressed,
provide for whatever necessities may arise, and
assist the congregation at services of worship.

Elders are set apart
for a ministry of watchful and responsible care
for the welfare and order of the church.
They have oversight of all members,
including one another, the deacons, and the ministers,
equipping everyone to live in harmony with God’s Word.
They ensure the Word of God is rightly proclaimed and taught,
and the sacraments faithfully administered.
Elders assist the minister/s with their good counsel,
and serve all Christians with advice, consolation, and encouragement.

Elders and deacons, together with the minister/s, form the consistory
to lead God’s people in proclaiming good news to the poor,
righteousness to the nations, and peace among all.
The consistory provides for the welfare of the church, stewardship of property and finance, and the spiritual benefit and growth of all Christ’s people.

As the three offices of deacon, elder, and minister of Word and sacrament, are united in Christ, so also in the church one office is not separate from the others. The minister of Word and sacrament does not serve without the elder and neither without the deacon. Together they enable the whole mission of the church. Everything in the church will be done decently and in order when faithful persons are called to office, and responsibly fulfil their charge.

The presiding minister addresses the deacons- and elders-elect:

Brothers and sisters, before almighty God, and in the presence of this congregation, answer sincerely these questions:

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

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

The presiding minister shall invite the congregation to stand:

Let us all stand with these brothers and sisters, 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 candidates remain standing; the presiding minister addresses the candidates:

Do you believe in your heart that you are called by Christ’s church, and therefore by God, to this office?

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 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, 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.

The presiding minister shall address the candidates for the Office of Deacon:
As deacons, will you faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully manifest Christ’s love and care, gather and distribute the offerings of God’s people, visit and comfort the distressed, minister to the poor and needy, and strive to advance God’s reign of justice and peace?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

The presiding minister shall address the candidates for the Office of Elder:

As elders, will you faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully study God’s Word, oversee the household of faith, encourage spiritual growth, maintain loving discipline, and provide for the proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

ORDINATION

Those who are to be ordained shall kneel individually before the presiding minister for prayer with the laying on of hands. The great consistory may join in the laying on of hands during the prayer. When all have come forward and are in place, the presiding minister shall say:

Let us pray.
God of grace, pour out your Holy Spirit, gentle as a dove, burning as fire, upon N (using Christian name only) and fill her/him with grace and power for this ministry of deacon/elder in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When all ordinands have received prayer with the laying on of hands, the presiding minister continues:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church, I declare that NNs (using full names) are ordained to the Office of Deacon and NNs_________________________ are ordained to the Office of Elder.
INSTALLATION

Elders and deacons of the great consistory extend the right hand of fellowship to the new elders and deacons before returning to their places. All elders and deacons being installed face the congregation. The presiding minister addresses them:

Elders N/s (using Christian names),
and deacons N/s__________________,
  be faithful in performing your duties,
  magnify the One who has called you to these high and holy offices,
  be zealous for the church of Christ,
       hospitable, prudent, upright,
       devout, and self-controlled.
       Love goodness,
       holding always to the mystery of the faith.

The presiding minister addresses the congregation:

Members of N_________________ Church,
please rise to affirm your covenant
with the elders and deacons
whom God has given us.

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,
do you receive in the name of the Lord,
these deacons and elders
as duly elected and ordained servants of Christ?

We do.

Do you promise to respect them
for the sake of the offices
for which they have been chosen and ordained?

We do.

Do you promise to encourage and pray for them,
to labor together in obedience to the gospel
for the unity, purity, and peace of the church,
the welfare of the whole world, and
the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ?

We do.
Beloved people of God,
receive these deacons and elders as Christ’s own servants.
Support them in love, that their work may bear fruit.

In the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ,
I declare that these brothers and sisters
are duly installed deacons and elders in this church.

Thanks be to God.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION 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 these elders and deacons,
keep them strong and faithful,
that your church may prosper in peace.
Grant them wisdom, courage, discretion, and benevolence,
that they may fulfil their charge
to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Bestow your grace on this people
that they may support these deacons and elders
with prayer, cooperation, and encouragement,
to guard them from growing weary in doing what is right.

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;
may 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 congregation may exchange the Peace using the following greeting or
through other appropriate words and actions.

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

The service continues with the Offering, a Hymn, and the Benediction.
THE ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION
OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

The respective ecclesiastical duties and powers of elders and deacons are laid
down in the Book of Church Order (Part 1, Article 1, Sec. 7 and 9). These shall be
made known to the congregation prior to their election and these officers shall ac-
quaint themselves therewith. Their civil powers vary under the laws of different
states.

The BCO (Part 1, Article 2, Sec. 10) directs that the names of elders- and deacons-
elect shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays preceding their
installation in order that lawful objections may be considered.

After an Approach to God, a proclamation of the Word of God, and the reception
of the gifts and offerings of the people, the presiding minister shall begin:

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, who by your Holy Spirit guided the councils of the
blessed Apostles and promised, through your Son Jesus Christ, to be with your
Church to the end of the world, look upon us in mercy and direct us by your Holy
Spirit that what we do at this time may result in the welfare of your kingdom, the
building up of your people, and the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ, our
Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITION

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you have chosen from among its members persons
here present to serve as elders and deacons in this church. Their names have been
published several times, and since there is no scriptural reason why they may not
be installed into their offices, we shall now proceed in the name of the Lord.

Jesus Christ is the head of his church, which is made up of many members with a
variety of gifts. The purpose of these gifts is that the whole church may confess
that he is Lord and serve in his name. To enable all of us to do this, he gives par-
ticular gifts to some. To the pastor he gives gifts for the ministry of the Word and
sacraments; to elders for the ministry of government and discipline; and to deacons
for the ministry of compassion and material maintenance. As these ministries are
united in Christ, so they are exercised jointly in the church.
Scripture teaches that those chosen to the office of elder are called along with pastors to encourage spiritual growth among the members and help them to walk in the way of Christ. Scripture also teaches that deacons are responsible for the ministry of compassion and material maintenance, representing God’s love and mercy in Christ.

By bringing together the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon, the consistory continues the full ministry of Christ in our day. Everything is done decently and in order in the church when faithful persons are chosen for and responsibly carry out these offices.

*The presiding minister may recognize by name those persons who have completed their terms of service as elders and deacons, thanking them on behalf of the congregation.*

**PRESENTATION AND INTERROGATION**

The presiding minister shall say:

The congregation has elected ________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________

to fill these offices. I now ask you to stand before us.

*When the candidates have done so, the presiding minister continues:*

That all may know your willingness to accept these responsibilities, I ask you to answer the following questions:

Do you reaffirm the vows you made when you confessed your faith in Christ and became a communicant member of his Church?

**I do.**

Do you believe in your heart that you are called by God’s Church and therefore by God himself to your respective office?

**I do.**

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 doctrines contrary thereto?
I do.

I ask you who have been elected elders, will you oversee and encourage the spiritual growth of the congregation; providing for the proclamation and hearing of God’s Word, the reverent celebration of sacraments, and the loving discipline of the members?

I will, with the help of God.

I ask you who have been elected deacons, will you manifest the love and care of Christ; gathering and distributing the offerings of his people, giving personal attention to the distressed, and exercising good stewardship over the goods and property of the congregation?

I will, with the help of God.

Will you, elders and deacons, be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America and do your best to further her mission at home and abroad?

I will.

ORDINATION

If any have not previously been ordained to the office into which they are to be installed, they shall kneel before the presiding minister. All who have been ordained to the office may join the presiding minister in the laying on of hands. During the laying on of hands, the presiding minister shall say:

N ____________________________ , by the authority given to his Church by our Lord Jesus Christ, we ordain you elder deacon, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER

The presiding minister shall offer the following prayer on behalf of all the candidates:

Let us pray.

Most merciful God, who called these persons to these high offices, enlighten them with your Spirit, strengthen them with your hand, and so govern them that their life and labor may be to the glory of your name and the advancement of your kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

INTERROGATION OF THE CONGREGATION

The presiding minister shall ask the elders- and deacons-elect to face the people and the members of the congregation to rise. When they have done so, the minister shall say:

Do you, the members of this congregation, receive these persons as elders and deacons in Christ’s church?

We do.

Will you respect them for the sake of the offices they bear, and promise to walk in the way of the Lord, faithfully heeding Jesus Christ and these servants who represent him?

We will.

The Lord bless you and multiply his grace to enable you to fulfill your promises.

Amen.

DECLARATION

The presiding minister shall ask the elders and deacons to turn about and address them.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, I declare that you are now ordained and duly installed in your respective offices, and commend you to the grace of God which will enable you to discharge all your duties. The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

Amen.

EXHORTATION

The congregation and the new officers may be seated. The presiding minister shall address first the new officers and then the members of the congregation saying:
Elders and deacons, I call upon you to be faithful in performing your duties, to magnify the Lord and show zeal for his church, for which he shed his own blood.

Brothers and sisters, receive these persons as you would receive Christ. Support them in love, that their work may be productive, and together we may serve the Lord and experience his blessings. Let us pray for one another that each may obtain whatever grace we need to fulfill our duties.

_The following or a similar prayer may be offered at this point or incorporated in the General Prayers._

Let us pray.

Almighty and merciful God, of whose help and guidance we always stand in need, bestow upon your servants such gifts as are necessary for them in their respective ministries. Give grace to them that they may serve you faithfully in this life and finally enter into the joy of the life to come.

Grant your grace also to your people whom they serve, so that all of us may fulfill our ministry, magnifying your name and increasing the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ; in whose name we pray. Amen.

_Then may follow the GENERAL PRAYERS and the LORD’S PRAYER, unless it has been used already in the service. A HYMN of Thanksgiving may be sung. The service shall conclude with the BENEDICTION._
THE ORDER FOR ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

The respective ecclesiastical duties and powers of elders and deacons are laid down in The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Articles 6 and 7) and those officers should acquaint themselves therewith. Their civil powers vary under the laws of different States.

The Constitution (Article 8, Sec. 6a) directs that the names of all elders and deacons elect shall be published from the pulpit of their congregation on three successive Lord’s Days, so that any lawful objections by competent persons may be interposed.

Elders and deacons may be re-elected, but should not be re-ordained. In such cases, the following Order shall be considered only as an installation.

Since elders and deacons are officers of the Word, they may be ordained or installed on the appointed Lord’s Day. After the Doxology in the first Order of Worship the service proceeds.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, who by thy Holy Spirit guided the councils of the blessed Apostles and promised, through thy Son Jesus Christ, to be with thy Church to the end of the world, look mercifully on us and so direct us by thy Holy Spirit that what we do at this time may be to the welfare of thy kingdom, to the building up of thy people in love and righteousness, and to the glory of thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Exposition

Beloved in the Lord, we have several times published to you the names of our brethren here present, who have been chosen to the office of elders and deacons in this church, to know whether anyone had anything to charge against them why they should not be inducted into their respective offices. Since nothing of Scriptural import has been alleged against any one of them, we shall now proceed in the name of the Lord.
The Church of Jesus Christ, of which he is the chief Shepherd and only Head, is composed of many members who have a diversity of gifts for the confession of his name and the service of one another. Although all the members are called to these tasks, some are furnished with gifts for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, others for the ministry of government and discipline, and still others for the ministry of mercy and material oversight.

*I Corinthians 12:4-6; I Corinthians 12:18-28; The Heidelberg Catechism Answer 55f*

The Reformed Church has maintained these ministries in the offices of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon. Since there is a unity of these offices in Christ himself, so also in the Church the one office is not to be separated from the others. The elder does not serve without the minister of the Word and neither without the deacon.

Concerning the office of the elder, Scripture teaches that those chosen to this office are called, together with the ministers of the Word, to take the spiritual oversight of the church which is committed to them, and to look diligently whether every member of the church lives in the way of Christ (Acts 20:28); to admonish those who behave themselves unbecoming the Gospel of Christ (Acts 20:31; Colossians 3:16); to prevent as much as possible the Sacraments from being profaned (I Corinthians 14:27-32); and to act according to Christian discipline against the impenitent, and to receive the penitent again into the fellowship of the Church (Matthew 16:19). Scripture teaches in many places that these responsibilities are not entrusted to one or two persons only, but to many who are ordained to this oversight (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

The elders, in all occurrences which relate to the welfare and order of the Church, are also to assist with their good counsel the minister of the Word; and to serve all Christians with advice, consolation, and encouragement. The elders are particularly enjoined to have regard to the teaching and conduct of the minister of the Word, to the end that all things be directed to the upbuilding of the church, and that no strange doctrine be taught. For the performance of this responsibility the elders are charged to study diligently the Word of God.

Concerning the office of the deacon, Scripture teaches that those first chosen to this office were men of faith and wisdom, who were to make the ministry of mercy and material oversight their particular responsibility (Acts 6:16).
As ministers of God’s love and mercy in Jesus Christ, their task is to continue our Lord’s manifold deeds of mercy; to gather, by good means, gifts and offerings for the Lord’s treasury, and to care for these with greatest fidelity; to distribute these with wisdom and compassion to persons in need and to causes which rightly look to the Church for help (Romans 13:8, 13); to visit and comfort the distressed; to give attention and care to all the benevolences of the congregation; to provide for whatever necessities may arise from time to time in relation to the Church and cause of Christ in general; and to assist the congregation at services of worship.

The elders with the deacons in consistory are to attend to all matters of temporal oversight in the church; provide for the support of the minister; and to exercise a careful stewardship of all funds, good, and properties of the congregation. The three offices of elder, deacon, and minister of the Word, being joined together in the consistory, thus continue within the Church the unity of these offices in Christ, as so many branches flourishing on the same Vine. In this manner, all things in the Church will be done decently and in order, when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed in the Word of God (I Corinthians 14:40).

**Interrogation of the Officers Elect**

*The minister shall read the names of the officers elect who shall stand before him and in the presence of the congregation.*

Beloved Brethren, that everyone may understand that you are willing to take upon you these offices, you are now required to answer the following questions:

I ask you, both elders and deacons, whether you feel in your hearts that you are lawfully called of God’s Church, and therefore of God himself, to these your respective offices?

Do you believe the books of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and the perfect doctrine of salvation, and do you reject all doctrines contrary thereto?

Do you promise to be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America, using your utmost endeavor to further her mission at home and abroad?
Do you promise, according to your ability, faithfully to discharge your respective responsibilities in keeping with the meaning of your offices?

Do you promise to walk in all godliness, and, in case you should become remiss in your duty, to submit yourselves to the admonition of the Church? What is your answer?

*Then each one shall respond:*

**Yes, truly, with all my heart.**

Since no man is sufficient of himself for these things, let us call on God for his grace.

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who called these servants to these holy offices, enlighten them with thy Spirit; strengthen them with thy hand; and so govern them in thy service that they may decently and fruitfully walk therein; to the glory of thy name and the advancement of thy kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Ordination and Installation**

*The minister shall then lay his hand on each kneeling candidate who has not before been ordained to this particular office, and say:*

Take thou, __________ (using the full name of each person to be ordained), authority to execute the office of elder (deacon); in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Declaration**

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, I now declare you to have been ordained and to be duly installed in your offices of elder and deacon. I now commend you to the grace of God in the discharge of all your duties. The blessing of God Almighty, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest on you and abide with you always. Amen.
Interrogation of the Congregation

The minister shall then ask the members of the congregation to rise.

Do you, the members of this congregation, who have prayerfully chosen these men to their respective offices, receive them as the duly elected and ordained servants of Christ in his Church?

Will you esteem them for the sake of the offices for which they have been chosen and ordained?

And do you promise to walk in the obedience of faith to Jesus Christ as Lord of his Church and to these servants through whom it pleases him to exercise his Lordship? What is your response?

The members of the congregation shall respond:

We do.

The minister may then say:

The Lord bless you and multiply his grace to you, that you may faithfully perform these promises.

Exhortation

After the congregation is seated, the minister shall say:

I exhort you, therefore, elders and deacons, to be faithful in the performance of your duties; to magnify him who has called you to these high and holy offices; and to show yourselves zealous for the Church of Christ, which he has purchased with his own blood.

Beloved in the Lord, I exhort you, receive these men as the servants of God. Esteen them highly in love for their work’s sake. So shall you be with them the servants of the Lord and receive from him the reward of righteousness.

That each of us in his respective calling may obtain grace for the faithful performance of his duties, let us call on the name of the Lord.
Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty and most merciful God, of whose help and guidance we ever stand in need, bestow upon these thy servants such gifts as are necessary for them in their respective ministries. Give grace to them that they may serve thee faithfully all their days and at last enter into the joy of their Lord.

Grant also thy grace to this people over whom they are now placed, to the end that, everyone acquitting himself of his duty, thy holy name may be magnified and the kingdom of thy Son Jesus Christ be enlarged. These things we ask through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

General Prayers

Hymn

Benediction

*In case the service of ordination and installation takes place elsewhere in the Order, it should be concluded with the Prayer. The service should then continue to follow the Order to the end.*
ORDER FOR RECOGNITION OF MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

This order is appropriate for recognizing those who contribute their time and talents to the various ministries of the congregation, including education, worship, witness, service, stewardship, and care.

After the sermon and the prayer for blessing on the Word, in the Response to God, the presiding minister shall begin:

Beloved in the Lord,
Christ alone is the source of all Christian ministry, through the ages calling men and women 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.

Baptized into Christ, we all are called to offer ourselves in thanksgiving to the Lord of the Church. It is our privilege to recognize and support those who are engaged in the work of (name of ministry) here at N______________________ Church.

A representative of the congregation may read a brief description of the ministry being recognized.

The persons engaged in this ministry stand; the minister addresses them:

Having offered yourselves in the ___________ ministry of this congregation, will you follow our Lord’s example of humble service?

Yes, with God’s help.

The congregation stands; the minister addresses the congregation:

Beloved people of God, will you give your prayers, encouragement, and support
to *this/these brother/s and sister/s*
that they may serve with joy and not with grief?

**We will.**

The minister continues with the prayer appropriate to the ministry being recognized.

Let us pray.

**Ministry of worship**

God of grace and glory,
whom saints delight to worship in heaven and on earth,
bless the ministry of those serving as *(ministry/position)*,
that we may know the joy of your presence
and may worship to the glory of your holy name.

**Ministry of education**

Almighty God,
source of wisdom and knowledge,
help us to study your Word diligently
and to grow in your love and in all that is good.
Support all who teach and all who learn,
that together we may know and do your will.

**Ministry of witness**

Lord God of our salvation,
it is your will that all people
might come to you through your Son, Jesus Christ.
Inspire our witness,
that all may know the power of your forgiveness
and the hope of the resurrection.

**Ministry of service**

God of love,
your Son washed the feet of the disciples,
as a sign of servanthood.
Uphold all who follow this example of humble service;
strengthen them in their faith.
Help us each to do faithful deeds of love and mercy.
Ministry of stewardship

Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth,
we thank you for the many gifts
we receive from your bountiful hand.
Strengthen and encourage your servants
who call us to be stewards of all your gifts.
Move us to respond in gratitude
to your gracious goodness.

Ministry of care

God of compassion,
who sent Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
give these servants open hearts
that they may show your love and care,
in faithful ministry with your people.

And concluding:

For all who offer themselves in your name,
we give thanks, O God.
Help them trust
your constant care and guidance;
give them joy in serving.
Help us all to be both willing servants and
thankful recipients of ministry,
that your name may be glorified,
your people live in peace, and
your will be done,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
CLASSICAL SERVICES

ORDER FOR ORDINATION
TO THE OFFICE OF
MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

The Book of Church Order (Chapter 1, Part II, Article 10, Section 5) directs the classis to appoint a time for the ordination service of candidates for the ministry and to conduct the service with proper solemnity and according to the order below. A brief sermon suitable to the occasion shall be preached. The presiding officer of the classis shall begin, following the proclamation of the Word.

PRESENTATION

Beloved in the Lord,
we have come to ordain a minister of Word and sacrament
in Christ’s holy church.
Christ alone is the source of all Christian ministry,
through the ages calling men and women 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 God calls and empowers
deacons, elders, and ministers of Word and sacrament
to enable the whole mission of the church.

Therefore let us welcome NN (using full name),
who comes to be ordained to the ministry of Word and sacrament.
A minister and elder of the classis student supervision committee, together with a representative of the congregation or other ministry requesting the ordination, present the candidate. The classis presenter/s shall say:

We present \( N \) (use Christian name only), whom we have examined and found to be a person of sound learning and Christian character.

On behalf of the Classis of \( N \)_________________,
we affirm that she/he is ready to be ordained to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

The candidate shall remain standing, facing the presiding officer. The presenters return to their places. The presiding officer continues:

Ministers are called to build up Christ’s church.

They are to proclaim God’s Word, to declare forgiveness through Jesus Christ, to call publicly on the name of the Lord on behalf of the whole congregation, to celebrate Christ’s holy sacraments, baptizing and presiding at the Lord’s Supper.

They are to be pastors and teachers, sharing people’s joys and sorrows, encouraging the faithful, recalling those who fall away, helping the sick and the dying.

\( N \)_________________, before almighty God, and in the presence of this congregation, the classis asks you to answer sincerely these questions:

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

\textbf{Yes, truly, with all my heart.}

The presiding officer shall invite the congregation to stand:

Let us all stand with \( N \)_________________, confessing our Christian 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 ministry of Word and sacrament?

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, 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, all the duties of a minister of Christ: to preach the Word of God in sincerity, to administer the sacraments in purity, to maintain proper discipline in the household of God, and to shepherd the flock faithfully?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

ORDINATION

The candidate shall kneel. The presiding officer shall call the elders and ministers of the classis to come forward (all will stay through the welcome). Those the classis shall invite may join in the laying on of hands during the prayer. The presiding officer shall continue:

Let us pray.

God of grace,
pour out your Holy Spirit,
gentle as a dove, burning as fire,
upon N____________ and fill her/him with grace and power for this ministry of Word and sacrament;
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

At the conclusion of the prayer with the laying on of hands, the candidate shall stand, the classis remains in front, and the presiding officer continues:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the church,
I now declare that NN_____________ is ordained to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

RESPONSE TO ORDINATION

NN_____________, will you publicly declare your commitment to Christian ministry among us?

The candidate shall respond by reading aloud the Form of the Declaration for Ministers. The congregation will stand for the reading and signing of the formulary.

In the name of our Lord, welcome to NN_____________ Classis.
We pledge our support, affection, and prayers while you live and work among us as a servant and minister of God’s Word.

Classis members and delegates extend the right hand of fellowship to the new member before returning to their places.

The newly ordained minister may be robed at this time.

The person designated by the classis shall deliver the charge. 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. NN_____________, guard what has been entrusted to you.
And when the chief shepherd appears,
you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION 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.

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 of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated; an officer of the
classis shall preside. The communion elements may be presented at this time.
Following the sacrament, a Hymn of Thanksgiving after Communion may be
sung, after which the newly ordained minister shall deliver the Benediction.
ORDER FOR RECEPTION INTO THE CLASSIS AND INSTALLATION OF A MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

The *Book of Church Order* (Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Section 3) directs that after a call to a minister of Word and sacrament to the pastorate of a church has been approved by the classis and accepted by the minister, the name of the person so called “shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays, so that opportunity may be afforded for the raising of lawful objections.” There being none, the classis shall install the minister of Word and sacrament according to the order for installation. The classis shall appoint a time for the installation service and conduct the service with proper 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.

PRESENTATION

Beloved in the Lord,
we have come to install a minister of Word and sacrament
in Christ’s holy church.
Christ alone is the source of all Christian ministry,
through the ages calling men and women 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 God calls and empowers
deacons, elders, and ministers of Word and sacrament.
As these three offices are united in Christ,
so also in the church,
one office is not separate from the others.
The minister of Word and sacrament
does not serve without the elder
and neither without the deacon.
Together they enable the whole mission of the church.

A representative of the congregation says:

N________________________ Church of the
Reformed Church in America,
with the guidance of the Holy Spirit,
has called NN (using full name)
to be its pastor and teacher.

The presiding officer continues:

The Classis of N___________________,
has approved the call to NN____________________
to be pastor and teacher of this church.

We invite you to come forward, N (using Christian name only), as a sign that you accept this call.

The candidate comes before the classis and congregation and stands facing the presiding officer. The presiding officer continues:

Ministers are called to build up Christ’s church.

They are to proclaim God’s Word,
to declare forgiveness through Jesus Christ,
to call publicly on the name of the Lord
on behalf of the whole congregation,
to celebrate Christ’s holy sacraments,
baptizing and presiding at the Lord’s Supper.

They are to be pastors and teachers,
sharing people’s joys and sorrows,
encouraging the faithful, recalling those who fall away,
helping the sick and the dying.

N________________________, you are here to be received into this classis
and installed as pastor and teacher of this congregation.
So all may know you are both willing and able
to accept this call to ministry in Christ’s church, the classis asks you to reaffirm the vows you made at your ordination as a minister of Word and sacrament:

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 Christian 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 ministry of Word and sacrament?

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, 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, all the duties of a minister of Christ: to preach the Word of God in sincerity, to administer the sacraments in purity, to maintain proper discipline in the household of God, and to shepherd the flock faithfully?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

If the minister being installed is already a member of the classis, proceed to the Installation.
RECEPTION INTO CLASSIS

N________________, will you publicly declare your commitment to Christian ministry among us?

The candidate shall respond by reading aloud the Form of the Declaration for Ministers. The congregation will stand for the reading and signing of the formulary.

In the name of our Lord, welcome to N________________ Classis. We pledge our support, affection, and prayers while you live and work among us as a servant and minister of the Word of God.

The congregation may be seated while classis members and delegates extend the right hand of fellowship to the new member, then return to their places.

INSTALLATION

The person designated by the classis shall deliver the charge to the minister. The charge that 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.

Will all the members of N_____________ Church rise to affirm their covenant with the minister 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 pastor and teacher?

We do.

Do you promise to receive with meekness and love the word of truth she/he proclaims?

We do.

Do you promise to honor her/his authority, welcome her/his pastoral care, and follow as she/he guides you in serving Jesus Christ, the only head of the church?

We do.

Do you promise to encourage and pray for her/him; to labor together in obedience to the gospel for the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, the unity, purity, and peace of the church, and the welfare of the whole world?

We do.

Do you promise her/him such financial and personal support that she/he shall serve among you with joy and not with grief as long as you covenant together?

We do.
The person designated by the classis shall deliver the charge to the congrega-
tion. The charge which follows shall be read. Additional brief counsel, if
authorized by the classis, may be made before it.

Beloved people of God,
receive with joy your minister in the Lord.
Remember God speaks to you through her/him.
Receive the word she/he shall preach to you
as it is in truth, the Word of God.
Respect those who labor among you,
esteam them highly in love
because of their work.
Let those who preach the gospel of peace,
bringing good news and announcing salvation,
be beautiful and pleasant to you.

The presiding officer shall continue.

In the name and by the authority of the Classis of N_______,
I now declare that the pastoral relationship
between the Reverend NN____________________
and N___________________ Church
is fully constituted, and that
the Reverend NN____________________
is a duly installed pastor and teacher of this church.

Thanks be to God.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION 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 this congregation:
strengthen them as they labor together,
preserve them in peace,
enlighten them through your Word.
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 Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated; the newly installed minister shall preside. The communion elements may be presented at this time. The service will conclude with a Hymn of Thanksgiving after Communion, and the Benediction will be given by the newly installed minister.
ORDER FOR COMMISSIONING A MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT INTO A SPECIALIZED MINISTRY

When a specialized ministry has been approved by a classis and commissioning is deemed appropriate (*Book of Church Order*, chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 4) the classis shall appoint a time and place for the commissioning service. The service shall be conducted with proper solemnity and 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.

PRESENTATION

Beloved in the Lord,
we have come to commission a minister of Word and sacrament into a specialized ministry of Christ’s holy church. Christ alone is the source of all Christian ministry, through the ages calling men and women 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 N_________________, has approved the ministry given to NN (*using full name*)
by the \( N \) (name of ministry/agency)
to be its (name of position).

We invite you to come forward, \( N \) (Christian name only),
as a sign that you accept this ministry.

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

Specialized ministers are called to build up Christ’s church.

They are 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 be pastors and teachers,
building up and equipping those with whom they work,
showing the gospel of God’s grace in word and deed,
sharing people’s joys and sorrows,
encouraging the faithful, recalling those who fall away,
helping the sick and the dying,
serving with the whole church
in its ministry to the world.

\( N \) (Christian name only),
so all may know you are both willing and able
to accept this ministry of Christ’s church,
the classis asks you to reaffirm the vows you made
at your ordination as a minister of Word and sacrament.

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 ministry of Word and sacrament?

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, 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, all the duties of a minister of Christ: to preach the Word of God in sincerity, to administer the holy sacraments in purity, to maintain proper discipline in the household of God, and to shepherd the flock faithfully?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

COMMISSIONING

The person designated by the classis shall deliver the charge to the minister. 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 ministry. 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 \( N \) (name of ministry/agency) rise to affirm their acceptance of the (name of position) 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 (name of position)?

We do.

Do you promise to honor her/his authority, and welcome her/his pastoral care as a representative of Jesus Christ?

We do.

Do you promise to encourage and pray for her/him as you labor together for the welfare of the world?

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 the Reverend NN_________________ is duly commissioned as a specialized minister serving as (name of position) at (name of ministry/agency).

Thanks be to God.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION 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 (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 will conclude with a Hymn of Thanksgiving and the
Benediction, which will be given by the newly commissioned minister.
The Lord’s Prayer

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.

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 on the right hand of the Father,
and 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.
The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.
CELEBRATION FOR THE HOME

This service is adapted from the Book of Occasional Services (Episcopal Church, 1991) and is intended for the blessing of a new home by friends and family. There should be sufficient copies of the service so that everyone present is able to respond and participate. One of the family members or guests may carry a candle from room to room. Following the service there may be a shared meal and gifts appropriate to the occasion. The language of the service may need to be reworded in each case, appropriate to the situation. Families are encouraged to use this basic form to develop and write their own ceremony.

When everyone has gathered, words of welcome and a prayer may be offered by the host and/or hostess or the minister.

Peace be to this home and to all who live here, 
this day and forevermore.

Unless the Lord builds the house, 
those who build it labor in vain.  
Psalm 127:1
We can build a house, Lord; we need you to create a home.

The Lord be with you. 
And also with you.

Let us pray.

O Lord our God, giver of all life and love, 
grant your blessing to N/s____________ 
whom you have brought under the shelter of this roof. 
May he/she/they ever seek your presence, 
that this house may be a home of peace and love; 
shield and protect him/her/them from all evil; 
bless him/her/them in all godly endeavors; 
and whether in prosperity or adversity, 
in health or in sickness, 
let him/her/them know 
that your hand is upon him/her/them. 
Grant that we may so follow you 
in every step of our daily lives that, 
though our paths may lead us from one another, 
we may all abide within the safe shelter of your love; 
through Jesus Christ our Lord. 
Amen.
Colossians 3:12-17 may be read by a family member or friend.

In the Entrance Hall

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;
if you hear my voice and open the door,
I will come in and eat with you, and you with me.

Revelation 3:20

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Psalm 121:8

Let us pray.

Sovereign Lord, you are Alpha and Omega,
the beginning and the end;
when you send your servant/s out from this place,
be his/her/their constant companion in the way,
and welcome him/her/them upon his/her/their return,
so that coming and going
he/she/they may be sustained by your presence,
O Christ our Lord.
Amen.

In the Living Room

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!

Psalm 133:1

Above all, maintain constant love for one another,
for love covers a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

Let us pray.

Give your blessing Lord,
to all who share this room,
that they may be knit together in fellowship here on earth
and joined with the communion of your saints in heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.
In the Dining Room and Kitchen

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you.

Joel 2:26a

The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food in due season.

Psalm 145:15

Let us pray.

O Lord, who has ordained that by daily food we shall renew our strength for service, bless the hands that work in this place and all those who share in the meals. Pour your Holy Spirit into each of their hearts, that, being nourished by your gifts and through the sharing of common meals, they may be enabled to give you thanks and praise. Make them grateful for all your mercies and mindful of the needs of others; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Family members may say:

I/We dedicate this kitchen and dining room to physical renewal and to family sharing.

In the Master Bedroom

Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping, that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.

Psalm 3:5

Let us pray.
O God of life and love,
the true rest of your people,
sanctify to N/s_________ his/her/their hours of rest and refreshment,
his/her/their sleeping, and his/her/their waking, and grant that,
strengthened by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,
he/she/they may rise to serve you
all the days of his/her/their life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

**In the Guest Room**

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for by doing that
some have entertained angels without knowing it.

*Hebrews 13:2*

Be hospitable to one another without complaining;
serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

*1 Peter 4:9-10*

Let us pray.

Loving God,
you have taught us to welcome one another
as Christ welcomed us.
Bless those who share the hospitality of this home.
May your care shield them,
the love of your son preserve them from all evil,
and the guidance of your Holy Spirit
keep them in the way that leads to eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**For the Children’s Rooms**

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me,
and do not stop them;
for it is to such as these
that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

*Matthew 19:14*

Praise the Lord, you children of the Lord.
Praise the name of the Lord.
Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,
your son, our Savior,
took young children into his arms and blessed them.
Embrace N/s___________ with your unfailing love,
protect him/her/them from all danger,
and bring him/her/them in safety to each new day,
until he/she/they greet/s with joy
the great day of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Family members may say:

I/We dedicate these bedrooms to rest, refreshment, and privacy.

In the Garden

For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness
and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Isaiah 61:11

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.

Psalm 16:6

Let us pray.

O Master Gardener,
even as you gave us a garden at creation to till and to keep,
so we continue to turn to the soil to refresh our souls.
We praise you for the harvest of the earth,
for the cycle of seasons and for the rhythm of growing things.
Be present with N/s___________ in this garden.
May he/she/they delight in its gifts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.
The dedication of family members may take place in the living room or where everyone can be present and comfortable.

I charge you to address friction and conflict with faith, and to practice tolerance and understanding of others. Make this home worthy of the presence of Jesus, the unseen guest. Let Christ be your guide in speech and conduct. Dedicate each day’s activities to the glory of God. Be conscious of the larger human family. In doing so you will find meaning in your home, strength to face the suffering, frustrations, and sorrows of life, and a foretaste of your eternal home.

Family members:

I/We dedicate myself/ourselves, in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Here the Doxology or another appropriate hymn may be sung.
WORSHIP AT THE CLOSING OF A CHURCH

Worship at the Closing of a Church is a service of the classis for acknowledging and celebrating the ministry of a congregation that is coming to a close. Preparation for the service may include interviewing members of the congregation, listening for stories of ministry which might be shared in the service, and gathering mementos of significant events in the life of the congregation. If material symbols of that church’s ministry were donated through memorial gifts, it may be appropriate to ask the donors if they would like the gift returned or if they would like to see it shared with another ministry or mission.

VOTUM

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen.

Psalm 124:8

SENTENCES

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones,
and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Moment of silent reflection.

DECLARATION OF INTENT

The following or similar words may be said:
We are here to celebrate the life of N________ Church, to give thanks to God for the gifts that have come to us and to others through this ministry, to acknowledge our sadness at the close of this ministry, and to affirm again our faith in Jesus Christ. Let us be grateful for God’s gifts, honest about our sorrow, open in our love, trusting in Jesus Christ, the only head of the church. The service today marks a passage for this congregation. A ministry is coming to a close; something new is about to be born. God is calling the members of this congregation to a new ministry. Congregations are formed and congregations are disbanded, but the Lord our God reigns forever.

HYMN

PRAYER

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: by the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Let us humble ourselves before God, opening our lives to God’s healing presence, forsaking all that separates us from God and neighbor. Let us think not only of personal evil but also of our communal sins of family, class, race, and nation. Let us confess to God whatever has wounded us or brought injury to others, that we may receive mercy and become for each other ministers of God’s grace.

Let us confess our sin together.
CONFESSION OF SIN

Merciful God, we confess
that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S FORGIVING GRACE

Hear the good news!
If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:
everything old has passed away; 
see, everything has become new!

2 Corinthians 5:17

HYMN

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE

SERMON

PRAYER

Remember, O Lord, your church,
to deliver her from all evil,
and make her perfect in your love;
and gather together from the four winds
the sanctified church into your kingdom,
which you have prepared for her.
For yours is the power and the glory evermore! Amen.
THANKSGIVING FOR THE MINISTRY OF N___________ CHURCH

Throughout the years, God has blessed N___________ Church, using the gifts of pastors and members to bring help and healing, changing lives in the name of Christ. We celebrate this!

Here may follow a brief program celebrating the past ministry of the congregation, or two or three testimonials reflecting on the ministry of the congregation may be shared by members of church.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

How can we thank you, O God, for the ministry of this church over these past ___ years?
For every person who has shown the love of Christ to another, for every quiet act of service which helped another, for every song of praise offered to you from the depths of a grateful heart, for every prayer uttered here which gave you honor and glory, for all the ways in which you have guided and directed these your people.

Here additional specific prayers of thanksgiving may be offered.

for all these gifts of ministry,

we give you thanks and praise!

DOXOLOGY

RITE OF PASSAGE TO NEW FORMS OF MINISTRY

Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.  

Isaiah 43:19

It is time for the ministry of this congregation to come to an end. It is also time to look at the new thing God is doing, as the people of N___________ Church journey on to offer gifts of ministry in new ways and in other places.
The symbols of ministry at N__________ Church, such as the communion chalice and plate, pitcher, baptismal bowl, pulpit Bible, etc., if not returned to those who gave them as memorials, may here be offered by a representative of the congregation to a representative of a new ministry of the classis, or to an officer of the classis who will hold them for use in future churches. The following is said by another representative of N__________ Church:

We offer these gifts to you, brothers and sisters, in celebration of the new thing God is doing through your ministries. May you continue to be “a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”

*Isaiah 42:6-7*

**CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION**

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us, and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

Congregation of N__________ Church:

let us approach with a true heart
in full assurance of faith,
with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience
and our bodies washed with pure water.

*Adapted from Hebrews 10:19-22*

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.

*Hebrews 10:23-24*

Classis president (to congregation of N__________ Church):

Beloved sisters and brothers, the church is not this building; it is you who are called by God to be followers of Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ needs you
and the gifts the Spirit has instilled within you
to build up Christ’s body.
So we charge and encourage you
to find a place of worship
where you may be encouraged in your faith
and where you may encourage others.

If the classis has already helped the remaining members join with other con-
gregations, the president may add:

We commend you to the welcoming and healing embrace
of the congregation/s of N___________ Church/es.

A representative from each receiving congregation may welcome members of
the congregation with the right hand of fellowship or with an embrace.

HYMN

BENEDICTION
SERVICE OF FAREWELL AND GODSPEED FOR PASTOR AND CONGREGATION

The Service of Farewell and Godspeed should take place after the classis requirements for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship have been met (*Book of Church Order*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 12, Section 8).

It is recommended that this service be included in the Response to the Word on the pastor’s last Sunday with the congregation. It may also be appropriate to celebrate the Lord’s Supper immediately prior to the farewell. The vice president of the consistory or other member of the congregation leads the service of farewell.

Our church family is ever changing. Loved ones are born into the family and loved ones come to the end of their lives. Individuals come and go in our church life. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. Today we celebrate the gifts you have brought to us as our pastor.

Hear Paul’s words written to the Ephesians:

> Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. The gifts he gave 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, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ

*Ephesians 4:7-13*

Today we share the time of farewell with N_____________, whose time as our pastor ends. *He/she* was installed as our pastor on ________________.

At your installation as the minister of Word and sacrament of this congregation, we heard this Scripture and we made vows to one another.
You were charged
to proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
to instruct us from the Word of God,
to admonish us, to comfort us, to reprove us.
You promised to administer the sacraments,
to share responsibility for our mutual Christian growth,
and to exercise Christian love and discipline.
You were charged to be a loyal witness to the Reformed Church in America
and to further its mission in the world.

We, in turn, promised
to receive the Word of truth you proclaimed
and to submit with cheer to the pastoral care you provided.
We promised to encourage you and pray for you,
to participate and work with you, and to financially care for you.

Paul’s words remind us today, even as he reminded the Ephesians:

to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,
with all humility and gentleness,
with patience, bearing with one another in love,
making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.
There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of all,
who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6

Pastor:
I thank you, my sisters and brothers,
for the love, kindness, and support shown me these past ____ years.
I am grateful for the ministry we have shared together.
With joy I recall what we accomplished with God’s help,
and with sadness those dreams not fulfilled.
I ask your forgiveness for mistakes made and expectations not met.

People:
We offer our forgiveness
and celebrate all that God has accomplished among us.
We are grateful for your ministry
and for your influence on our lives.
We ask your forgiveness for mistakes made
and for expectations not met.
Pastor:
I receive your gratitude
and forgive your shortcomings.
And I release you
from the vows and promises made at my installation.

People:
We release you from your promises to us,
and we offer you our blessing as you
leave to minister elsewhere.

The leader may offer the following or similar prayers:

O God, you have bound us together for a time
as pastor and people to work for your church in this place.
We give you thanks for the ministry we have shared.

Silence

We give you thanks for your patience with us
despite our blindness and slowness of heart.
We thank you for your forgiveness and mercy when we have failed.

Silence

We especially thank you
for your never-failing presence with us through these years,
and for the deepened knowledge of you and of each other.

Silence

We give you thanks
for those who have been joined
to this part of Christ’s family through baptism.
We thank you for opening our hearts and minds
again and again to your Word,
and for feeding us abundantly at your table.
We remember those who have gone before
and we look with hope toward those who will come.

Silence

Now, we pray, be with N___________ and with his/her family,
and with this congregation.
Grant that all of us, by drawing closer to you,
may always be close to each other in the communion of saints.
All this we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

The congregation may share the peace of Christ.

At the close of worship, the congregation may wish to send the pastor forth with a blessing, which could be spoken and/or sung:

    Unto God’s gracious mercy we commit you.
The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you
and give you peace,
both this day and forever. Amen.

It may be appropriate to remember the ministry together in greater detail. It is appropriate for people to bring gifts and speak words of appreciation, which can be included in the time of worship or at a reception and/or meal to follow.
BLESSING—PRAYER FOR GODSPEED:  
A SERVICE OF FAREWELL
(for members of the congregation who are moving to a new location)

On the Sunday prior to their moving, the pastor may announce at an appropriate time in the service, perhaps before the prayer of thanksgiving and intercession, that N (family/individual) will soon be moving. The family/individual may be invited to come forward to stand before the congregation.

The pastor addresses the congregation:

The Scriptures are filled with stories of people who have been called to move to new places: Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph, Paul and Barnabas, Priscilla and Aquilla. Filled with uncertainty about what lay ahead, these people of God could not have found their moves easy. Yet they were also filled with excitement, trusting that God was calling them and guiding them to a new place.

And now you, our beloved friend/s, are preparing to leave us and go to a new place, a new home, and a new church.

As a part of this body of Christ over the past years, you have given of yourselves/yourself in ways that we have appreciated and will miss.

Here the pastor may mention the gifts and qualities of those who are moving as well as their specific contributions to the life of the church.

We ask God’s blessing upon you as we lift our hearts in prayer. Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O God, for you have created the wide and wonderful world in which we live. We praise you for your constant care for those who have trusted you in ages past, who journeyed in faith to new lands of promise. We trust that now you will hold N___________ securely in your hands as they, too, follow/s your call to a new place. May they take with them hearts filled with your love and grace,
that those with whom they live and work may see in them the face of Jesus Christ. Bless them that they may be a blessing. Guide them to a new church home, where they may continue to grow in grace, in Spirit, and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Pastor (to those moving):

N____________, may God’s rich blessings be yours!
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

(use Christian names, omit surnames)

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
who has 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 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 ________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

(name of the church)

(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

N

(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 [name] (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.
THE ORDER FOR ADMISSION TO THE LORD’S TABLE OF THOSE BAPTIZED IN INFANCY

The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Article 6) states that it is the office of the elders, together with the ministers of the Word, to “...pass upon the fitness of those who desire to make public confession of faith...” (Sec. 1c). “Only those persons may be received as members of the Church in full communion who have made a confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ before the Board of Elders...” (Sec. 6a). From this it seems clear that the minister, if any, and elders shall pass upon the fitness of baptized persons to be received into full communion, and authorize their admission to the Lord’s Table before the congregation.

The following procedure and office fulfill these constitutional provisions. The order consists of two parts, the one before the elders, offered as a suggestion, and the one before the congregation.

This form of interrogation before the elders is also to be used for adults baptized at the time of their confession of faith.

BEFORE THE ELDERS

At the meeting of the elders, the minister or presiding elder shall present the candidates, naming each one. The following or some other suitable prayer may be made.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who hast called us out of darkness into thy marvelous light, grant us thy favor, that what we do at this time may be pleasing in thy sight, that thy Church may be strengthened and increased, and that thy name may be glorified in the midst of thy people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Interrogation

The minister, who is to examine the candidates in the presence of the elders, shall then say:
Dearly Beloved, you come before us to confess your faith and to confirm the covenant of God of which your Baptism is the sign and seal, and to seek admission to the Lord’s Table. That we may know the sincerity of your purpose and your understanding of this solemn engagement, you will answer the following questions:

*The minister may use these and other questions:*

Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Do you rely upon him and him alone for salvation?

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule of faith and practice in the Church?

Will you confess Christ publicly before men, and by God’s grace seek to walk worthily of your Christian calling?

What is your answer?

*The candidates may then respond:*

**Yes, truly, with all my heart.**

*The elders may examine the candidates further as to their knowledge of the Christian Faith as contained in the Apostles’ Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer. They may also examine the sincerity of their decision to seek admission to the full communion of Christ’s Church.*

*The elders with the minister, having determined the fitness of the candidates, may publicly receive them before the congregation by using the Order provided. If the reception is not a public one, then the Order shall be used before the elders. The meeting before the elders may be closed with the following or another suitable prayer.*

**Prayer**

Gracious and eternal God, we bless thee for the fellowship which we have with one another in thy Church and, above all, for Jesus Christ, our living Lord and King. Enable us, by the power of thy Spirit, to walk together in harmony and in true holiness; to help one another by word and example in the faithful performance of our duties; and to live worthily of the Gospel.
of Christ and to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to say when we pray:

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, forever. Amen.

BEFORE THE CONGREGATION

The public reception into full membership and admission to the Lord’s Table should be after the service of the Word.

Admission

The minister shall say to the candidates as they stand:

Dearly Beloved in Christ, as children of your heavenly Father, you stand here for the deliberate and public confirmation in your own person of that covenant of God of which your Baptism is the sign and seal. You have already been duly instructed, and have made confession before us of your faith in Jesus Christ. And now, in this most solemn manner before God and his Church, you are to repeat and renew that confession. I ask each one of you to join with the congregation in confessing our Christian Faith, in the words of 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.

The minister, after the congregation is seated, shall then ask each of the candidates the following questions:
Do you acknowledge and confess the Apostolic Faith thus affirmed as your faith, and do you purpose steadfastly to continue to the end of your life in the truth affirmed in these Articles of the Christian Faith, as they are taught in the Church of Jesus Christ, according to the Word of God?

Do you acknowledge that you are delivered from all your sins and miseries only by the saving work of Jesus Christ, and will seek to show true gratitude to God for this deliverance?

Do you promise to make faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the use of the Sacraments; to give faithful adherence to the doctrines and teaching of the Church; to walk in the spirit of Christian fellowship and brotherly love with the congregation; to submit yourself to all Christian admonition; to offer faithfully to the service of God your prayers and your gifts; and to seek the things that make for purity and peace in the Church of Jesus Christ as long as you live? What is your response?

*The candidates shall then reply:*

**Yes, truly, with all my heart.**

**Declaration**

*The minister, laying his hand on the head of each of the kneeling candidates, may then make formal declaration saying:*

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his Church, I declare that N______________, received into the visible membership of the holy catholic Church through Baptism, is now admitted to the Lord’s Table.

*After the declaration, the minister shall use the following or another suitable prayer:*

**Prayer**

Defend, O Lord, these thy servants, with thy heavenly grace, that they may continue thine forever, and daily increase in thy Spirit more and more, until they come to thine eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Or,

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, guard, we pray thee, the life and work of these thy servants, and fulfill to them thy gracious promises. Let thy Holy Spirit dwell in them, enabling them to overcome the temptations of the world, to adorn the doctrine of our Savior in all things, and finally to obtain their inheritance among the saints in light. Bless also this congregation of thy people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

General Prayers

Hymn

Benediction

*If public reception into full membership and admission to the Lord's Table is at another place in the Order, it should be concluded with prayer. The service should then continue to follow the Order to the end.*
PASTORAL SERVICES

THE LORD’S SUPPER IN HOME AND HOSPITAL

The Lord’s Supper should be celebrated with those who are ill or homebound when it is celebrated by the congregation, or at those times when it may serve as a visible sign and seal of Christ’s ministry of care and healing. To show the communal character of the Lord’s Supper, it is encouraged that family members and friends be invited to participate.

This service should be conducted by the pastor with an elder, or by two or more elders specifically appointed to administer the sacrament by the board of elders. The celebrant may carefully abbreviate the service given the physical condition of the recipient.

The cloth should be put in place, the plate, bread, and cups set out.

THE APPROACH TO GOD

VOTUM

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Amen.

SALUTATION

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Now in the presence of the Lord, let us confess our sins.
Let us pray in silence.

Silence

O God, who hears our prayers before we speak, who knows our needs before we name them, you have heard the confessions of our hearts. Grant us now your mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who came into the world breaking sin’s bond, rescuing us from sin, and bringing us to new life.

Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:17

THE WORD OF GOD

THE PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

THE LESSON

A psalm or other brief passage of Scripture may be read.

And/or

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 6:35

MEANING

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Supper we are about to celebrate is a feast of remembrance, of communion, and of hope. We come remembering that our Lord Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the law, even to death on the cross. Because of God’s eternal covenant of grace, we are accepted. We will never be forsaken.

We come to commune with this same Christ who has promised to be with us always. Christ is the true Bread which nourishes us and the Vine in whom we must live if we are to bear fruit. The Holy Spirit unites us into one body and in communion with all the saints. So we receive this supper in Christ’s love and our affection for one another.
We come in hope believing that
as surely as we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we will be raised from the dead into eternal life.

This is the Lord’s Table. Come, for all things are now ready.

COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray.

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

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
almighty and everlasting God.
You created the heavens and the earth;
you preserve us with your care;
you revealed the fullness of your love for us
by sending Jesus Christ.
By his life, death, and resurrection
you have reconciled us to yourself.

With the heavenly host
and with the saints of all times and places,
we lift up our hearts in joyful praise, saying:

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

Gracious God,
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.
Accept the gift of our lives
that we may live in you and serve your kingdom.
Being joined together in Christ,
may your whole church be one;
and at the last day bring us with all your saints
into the joy of your eternal kingdom.
Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.”

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

As the bread is distributed:

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

As the cup is distributed:

The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.
THE RESPONSE TO GOD

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Here, prayer shall be offered with specific reference to the needs of the person who is ill or homebound. Prayers should include the whole church.

THANKSGIVING

Since the Lord has now fed us at his Table, let us praise God’s holy name with heartfelt thanksgiving.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; 
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul, 
and forget not all his benefits, 
who forgives all your iniquity, 
who heals all your diseases, 
who redeems your life from the Pit, 
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. 
The Lord is merciful and gracious, 
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. 
He does not deal with us according to our sins, 
nor repay us according to our iniquities. 
For as the heavens are high above the earth, 
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; 
as far as the east is from the west, 
so far he removes our transgressions from us. 
As a father has compassion for his children, 
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him, 
who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, 
and will also give us all things with him.

Therefore shall my mouth and heart 
show forth the praise of the Lord, 
from this time forth forevermore. 
Amen.

From Psalm 103, with additions
BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you, and remain with you always.

Amen.
SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN HEALING
IN HOME OR HOSPITAL

Ministers, elders, deacons, or other visitors should use this service with sensitivity to the specific needs of the person/s being visited and after ascertaining their willingness to participate in this act of faith. It would be most appropriate to use this service after a preliminary conversation and expression of pastoral concern.

SALUTATION

Grace and peace to you
from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are here in the name of the Lord Jesus, whose ministry to God's people was one of healing power and saving grace. He promised those who believe in him that he would be with them always, and his promise is true. Christ is present among us still to heal and to make whole.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Now in the presence of the Lord, let us confess our sins. Let us pray.

Silence may be kept, after which one of the visitors may offer the following, or another prayer.

O God, who hears our prayers before we speak them, who knows our needs before we raise them up, you have heard the confession of our hearts. Now grant us your mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord, who came into the world to rescue us from sin and bring us to life in him.

Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The following or another scriptural assurance may be read.

With everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.
I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.

Isaiah 54:8, 43:25, 44:22

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Prayers may be offered for the person being visited, asking for God’s healing love and tender care to be granted in Christ’s name. The prayers may be concluded with the following petition:

O God, who in Jesus Christ called us out of the darkness into your marvelous light; enable us always to declare your wonderful deeds, thank you for your steadfast love, and praise you with heart, soul, mind, and strength, now and forever. 

Amen.

SCRIPTURE

One or more brief passages of Scripture may be read.

Before an Operation
1 Timothy 1:12; Philippians 4:13; Psalm 91:1, 11; Isaiah 30:15b; Matthew 28:20; Psalm 46:1

For Confidence in God
Psalm 23; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 27:1-3; Ephesians 3:20; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 13:5b

The Purpose of Suffering
John 9:1-3; John 11:3-4; Psalm 66:10; Hebrews 12:6, 11; Job 1:8-12; Job 42:5-6; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Sense of Guilt or Failure
Psalm 51:1, 7-10; Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 103:8; John 6:37; Luke 15:7; 1 John 1:9

Anxiety
Psalm 26:3; Isaiah 30:15; Philippians 4:7-8; Matthew 6:34; Psalm 42:1-5
Patience
Romans 5:3-4; Psalm 46:10a; Job 42:10; James 5:10-11; Philippians 4:13

Discouragement and Disappointment
Psalm 37:7; Psalm 138:8; Matthew 11:28; Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 6

Aged Persons
Psalm 16:5-11; Psalm 71:16-24; Luke 2:29-32; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Sleeplessness
Psalm 4:8; Psalm 30:5b; Psalm 46:10a; 1 Peter 5:7; 1 John 4:18

Fear of Death
Psalm 23:4; Romans 8:37-39; John 14:1ff; Isaiah 12:2; Psalm 46:1-4; Isaiah 41:10

Hope at the Time of Death
Psalm 23; John 14:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Revelation 21:4-5; Revelation 22:3-5

Thanksgiving
Psalm 103:1-4; Psalm 118:5, 17-18; Psalm 138:1-3; Psalm 22:23-25; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 40:2-5

Childbirth
Psalm 116:1-5; Psalm 127:3-5a; John 16:21-22; James 1:17; Mark 10:14-16; Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; 2 Corinthians 12:9a

One or both of the following lessons shall also be read:

Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.


And/or

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

James 5:13-15
LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING WITH OIL

The pastoral visitors shall lay hands on the head of the person being visited. One of them may say one of the following, after which the person being visited may also be anointed with oil.

May the hands of the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, rest upon you now in divine blessing and healing. May the cleansing stream of his pure life fill your whole being, body, mind, and spirit, to strengthen and heal you.

Amen.

Or

Eternal God, for Jesus’ sake, send your Holy Spirit upon your servant N__________; drive away all sickness of body and spirit; make whole that which is broken. Grant deliverance from the power of evil and true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered in our behalf, but also rose from death so that we too could live. In his name we pray.

Amen.

A brief silence may be kept, after the sick person has been anointed.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks to the Lord. Let us pray.

Most gracious God, source of all healing; we give thanks to you for all your gifts but most of all for the gift of your Son, through whom you gave and still give health and salvation to all who believe. As we wait in expectation for the coming of that day when suffering and pain shall be no more, help us by your Holy Spirit to be assured of your power in our lives
and to trust in your eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

BENEDICTION
ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN HEALING
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

THE APPROACH TO GOD

VOTUM

SENTENCES

SALUTATION

HYMN

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

The minister may introduce the prayer with one of the following or another suitable call to confession.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalm 32:1, 3, 5 (NIV)

Or

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9

And

Let us confess our sin to almighty God. Let us pray.

One of the following prayers or another appropriate confession shall be said or sung by all.
Have mercy upon us, O God, according to your loving-kindness. According unto the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin, for we acknowledge our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us.

Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us the joy of your salvation, and uphold us with your free Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from Psalm 51

Or

Merciful God, in compassion for your sinful children you sent your son Jesus Christ to be the savior of the world. Grant us grace to confess the sin which made it needful for him to be broken that we might be made whole, to be troubled in spirit that we might be given peace, to be put to death on the cross that we might be restored to life.

A brief period of silent confession may be allowed, after which the prayer shall continue.

Give us a true longing to be free from sin, and a true willingness to follow him who stooped to our need and who raises us up from the misery of sin to the wholeness of forgiven life, even Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The following assurance, or one of those cited, or one drawn from another portion of Scripture may be used.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit.

Psalm 103:1-4a

And/or Psalm 30:1-3; Psalm 41:1-3; Ephesians 2:1-7 (8-10)

LAW OF GOD AND/OR SUMMARY OF THE LAW

PSALTER AND GLORIA

THE WORD OF GOD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

LESSONS

SERMON

PRAYER FOR BLESSING ON THE WORD

THE RESPONSE TO GOD

CONFESSION OF FAITH

OFFERING

DOXOLOGY

(THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER)

When the Sacrament is celebrated, the following may be used in place of the Prayers of Intercession. When it is not celebrated, the Litany and Prayer of Thanksgiving may be used in place of the General Prayers.

LITANY OF INTERCESSION FOR HEALING

O God the Father, whose will for us and for all your people is health and salvation,

have mercy on us.
O God the Son, who came that we might have life and have it in abundance, have mercy on us.
O God the Holy Spirit, whose indwelling makes our bodies the temples of your presence, have mercy on us.
O Triune God, we pray you to hear us, and that you will grant your grace to all who stand in need of healing both of body and spirit, and lead them to look with confidence to you;
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant patience and perseverance to all who are disabled by injury or illness, and increase their courage,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant peace to all who are troubled by confusion or pain, and set their minds at rest,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant relief from suffering to all sick children, and give them a sure sense of your tender love and care,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant rest to all whose increasing years bring weariness, distress, or loneliness, and give them the abiding comfort of your presence,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant confidence to all about to undergo surgery or difficult procedures, and keep them free from fear,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant purpose to the church as it seeks to carry on Christ’s ministry of healing to suffering humanity, and keep it always true to the gospel of Christ,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant skill and compassion to doctors, nurses, technicians, aides, and all who are called to practice medical arts, and make strong their dedication to help others,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.
That you will grant to all people the refreshment of quiet sleep and joy of resting in your everlasting arms, that we may rejoice in your care while we are on earth, and in the world to come, have eternal life,
we beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

The Litany may continue with petitions for specific needs of the people. It may conclude with the following ascription:

O God, who in Jesus Christ called us out of the darkness into your marvelous light; enable us always to declare your wonderful deeds, thank you for your steadfast love, and praise you with heart, soul, mind, and strength, now and forever. Amen.
LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING WITH OIL

One or both of the following Scriptures shall be read:

*Luke 9:1-2* and/or *James 5:13-16*

After which the minister shall invite worshipers to receive the laying on of hands and anointing with oil using these or similar words:

**INVITATION**

In the name of the Lord Jesus, who sent forth his disciples to preach the kingdom of God and to heal, we invite you who wish to receive the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil to come forward. If you desire us to come to you, please raise your hand or ask a neighbor to do so for you.

We invite all here present to participate in this act of faith through the offering of silent prayers for those who seek Christian healing.

**BLESSING**

Since healing is a ministry of the church, it is appropriate that the minister be joined by one or two elders, or such persons as the board of elders may designate, for the laying on of hands. The minister or an elder may also anoint the worshiper with oil following the blessing.

May the hands of the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, rest upon you now in divine blessing and healing. May the cleansing stream of his pure life fill your whole being, body, mind, and spirit, to strengthen and heal you. Amen.

Or

Eternal God, for Jesus’ sake, send your Holy Spirit upon your servant N____________; drive away all sickness of body and spirit; make whole that which is broken. Grant deliverance from the power of evil and true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered in our behalf but also rose from death so that we, too, could live. In his name we pray. Amen.

A brief silence may be kept after the last worshiper has been anointed.

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

After all have returned to their places the minister may offer the following or another appropriate thanksgiving prayer.
Most gracious God, source of all healing, we give thanks to you for all your gifts, but most of all for the gift of your Son, through whom you gave and still give health and salvation to all who believe. As we wait in expectation for the coming of that day when suffering and pain shall be no more, help us by your Holy Spirit to be assured of your power in our lives and to trust in your eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN

BENEDICTION
ORDERS FOR
CHRISTIAN HEALING
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

THE APPROACH TO GOD

VOTUM
SENTENCES
SALUTATION
HYMN
PRAYER OF CONFESSION

The minister may introduce the prayer with one of the following or another suitable call to confession.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

*Psalm 32:1, 3, 5*

or

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*I John 1:8-9*

and

Let us confess our sin to almighty God. Let us pray.

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin, for we acknowledge our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us the joy of your salvation, and uphold us with your free spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Adapted from Psalm 51*

or
Merciful God, in compassion for your sinful children you sent your Son Jesus Christ to be the savior of the world. Grant us grace to confess the sin which made it needful for him to be broken that we might be made whole, to be troubled in spirit that we might be given peace, to be put to death on the cross that we might be restored to life.

_A brief period of silent confession may be allowed, after which the prayer shall continue._

Give us a true longing to be free from sin, and a true willingness to follow him who stooped to our need and who raises us up from the misery of sin to the wholeness of forgiven life, even Jesus Christ our Lord in whose name we pray. Amen.

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit.  

_Psalm 103:1-4a_  

_or Psalm 30:1-3, Psalm 41:1-3, Ephesians 2:1-7 (8-10)_

**LAW OF GOD AND/OR SUMMARY OF THE LAW**

**PSALTER AND GLORIA**

**THE WORD OF GOD**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**  
**HYMN**  
**LESSONS**  
**SERMON**  
**PRAYER FOR BLESSING ON THE WORD**  
**CONFESSION OF FAITH**  
**OFFERING**  
**DOXOLOGY**  
**THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER**

_Atime when the Sacrament is celebrated the following may be used in place of the Prayers of Intercession. When it is not celebrated, this Litany and Prayer of Thanksgiving may be used in place of the General Prayers._
THE RESPONSE TO GOD

LITANY OF INTERCESSION FOR HEALING

O God the Father, whose will for us and for all your people is health and salvation;

Have mercy on us.

O God the Son, who came that we might have life and have it in abundance;

Have mercy on us.

O God the Holy Spirit, whose indwelling makes our bodies the temples of your presence;

Have mercy on us.

O Triune God, we pray you to hear us, and that you will grant your grace to all who stand in need of healing both of body and spirit, and lead them to look with confidence to you;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant patience and perseverance to all who are disabled by injury or illness, and increase their courage;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant peace to all who are troubled by confusion or pain, and set their minds at rest;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant relief from suffering to all sick children, and give them a sure sense of your tender love and care;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant rest to all whose increasing years bring weariness, distress or loneliness, and give them the abiding comfort of your presence;
We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant confidence to all about to undergo surgery or difficult procedures, and keep them free from fear;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant purpose to the Church as it seeks to carry on Christ’s ministry of healing to suffering humanity, and keep it always true to the Gospel of Christ;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant skill and compassion to doctors, nurses, technicians, aides, and all who are called to practice medical arts, and make strong their dedication to help others;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

That you will grant to all people the refreshment of quiet sleep and joy of resting in your everlasting arms, that we may rejoice in your care while we are on earth, and in the world to come have eternal life;

We beseech you to hear us, O Lord.

The Litany may continue with petitions for specific needs of the people. It may conclude with the following ascription:

O God, who in Jesus Christ called us out of the darkness into your marvelous light; enable us always to declare your wonderful deeds, thank you for your steadfast love, and praise you with heart, soul, mind, and strength, now and forever. Amen.

LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING WITH OIL

Luke 9:1-2 and/or James 5:13-16 shall be read: After which the minister shall invite worshipers to receive the laying on of hands and anointing with oil using these or similar words:

In the name of the Lord Jesus who sent forth his disciples to preach the kingdom of God and to heal, we invite you who wish to receive the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil to come forward or summon us to come to your side.
We invite all here present to participate in this act of faith through the offering of silent prayers for those who seek Christian healing.

Since healing is a ministry of the church it is appropriate that the minister be joined by one or two elders, or such persons as the board of elders may designate, for the laying on of hands. The minister or an elder may also anoint the worshiper with oil following the blessing.

May the hands of the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, rest upon you now in divine blessing and healing. May the cleansing stream of his pure life fill your whole being, body, mind and spirit, to strengthen and heal you. Amen.

or

Eternal God, for Jesus’ sake, send your Holy Spirit upon your servant N______: drive away all sickness of body and spirit; make whole that which is broken. Grant deliverance from the power of evil, and true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered on our behalf but also rose from death so that we, too, could live. In his name we pray. Amen.

A brief silence may be kept after the last worshiper has been anointed.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

After all have returned to their places the minister may offer the following or another appropriate thanksgiving prayer.

Most gracious God, source of all healing; we give thanks to you for all your gifts but most of all for the gift of your Son, through whom you gave and still give health and salvation to all who believe. As we wait in expectation for the coming of that day when suffering and pain shall be no more, help us by your Holy Spirit to be assured of your power in our lives and to trust in your eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN

BENEDICTION

• • • • •
ON OTHER OCCASIONS

VOTUM, SENTENCES, SALUTATION
HYMN OF PRAISE
WORD OF EXPLANATION:

It is appropriate that the worship leader explain the nature of a service of Christian healing, emphasizing God’s presence and power to strengthen and support and bring increasing wholeness to his people.

PSALMS/HYMN
LESSON(S)
BRIEF SERMON
PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND SELF-EXAMINATION
INTERCESSIONS
LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING WITH OIL
HYMN (OR PRAYER) OF THANKSGIVING
BENEDICTION

• • • • •

IN HOME OR HOSPITAL VISITATION

Ministers, elders, deacons, or other visitors should use this service with sensitivity to the specific needs of the person(s) being visited and after ascertaining their willingness to participate in this act of faith. It would be most appropriate to use this service after a preliminary conversation and expression of pastoral concern.

SALUTATION

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. We are here in the name of the Lord Jesus whose ministry to God’s people was one of healing power and saving grace. He promised those who believe in him that he would be with them always, and his promise is true. He is present among us still to heal and to make whole.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Now in the presence of the Lord, let us confess our sins. Let us pray.

Silence may be kept, after which one of the visitors may offer the following, or another prayer.
O God, who hears our prayers before we speak them, who knows our needs before
we raise them up; you have heard the confession of our hearts. Now grant us your
mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord, who came into the world to
rescue us from sin and bring us to life in him. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The following, or another scriptural assurance may be read.

With everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.
I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not re-
member your sins. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.

Isaiah 54:8, 43:35, 44:22

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Prayers may be offered for the person being visited asking for God's healing love
and tender care to be granted in Christ's name. The prayers may be concluded
with the following petition:

O God, who in Jesus Christ called us out of the darkness into your marvelous light;
enable us always to declare your wonderful deeds, thank you for your steadfast
love, and praise you with heart, soul, mind, and strength, now and forever. Amen.

LESSONS

One or more brief passages of Scripture may be read. Those cited in the Order for
the Visitation of the Sick, Liturgy 1968 (pp. 170-1) may be especially appropriate.
One or both of the following lessons shall be read:

And [Jesus] called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all
demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God
and to heal.


and/or

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is any one happy? Let him sing songs
of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over
him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer offered in faith
will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will
be forgiven.

James 5:13-15 NIV
LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANointING WITH OIL

The pastoral visitors shall lay hands on the head of the sick person. One of them may say one of the following after which the sick person may be anointed with oil.

May the hands of the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, rest upon you now in divine blessing and healing. May the cleansing stream of his pure life fill your whole being, body, mind and spirit, to strengthen and heal you. Amen.

or

Eternal God, for Jesus’ sake, send your Holy Spirit upon your servant N________; drive away all sickness of body and spirit; make whole that which is broken. Grant deliverance from the power of evil, and true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered on our behalf, but also rose from death so that we, too, could live. In his name we pray. Amen.

A brief silence may be kept, after the sick person has been anointed.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks to the Lord. Let us pray.

Most gracious God, source of all healing; we give thanks to you for all your gifts but most of all for the gift of your Son, through whom you gave and still give health and salvation to all who believe. As we wait in expectation for the coming of that day when suffering and pain shall be no more, help us by your Holy Spirit to be assured of your power in our lives and to trust in your eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BENEDICTION
ORDER FOR THE VISITATION
OF THE SICK

Those who visit the sick should prayerfully prepare for a brief visit. With understanding, hope, and cheer, let them seek to lead the sick to confidence in God and to a victorious witness. The Scripture and the Prayer should, whenever possible, be related to the conversation.

Scripture

For several occasions, some passages and verses are suggested, to which the minister, elder, or visitor may add others of his own choosing appropriate to the occasion.

BEFORE AN OPERATION

I Timothy 1:12; Philippians 4:13; Psalm 91:1, 11; Isaiah 30:15b; Matthew 28:20; Psalm 46:1

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Psalm 23; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 27:103; Ephesians 3:20; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 13:5b

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

John 9:1-3; John 11:3, 4; Psalm 66:10; Hebrews 12:6, 11; Job 1:8-12; Job 42:5, 6; II Corinthians 1:3-5

SENSE OF GUILT OR FAILURE

Psalm 51:1, 7-10; Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 103:8; John 6:37; Luke 15:7; I John 1:9

ANXIETY

Psalm 26:3; Isaiah 30:15; Philippians 4:7-8; Matthew 6:34; Psalm 42:1-5

PATIENCE

Romans 5:3-4; Psalm 46:10a; Job 42:10; James 5:10-11; Philippians 4:13
DISCOURAGEMENT AND DISAPPOINTMENT

Psalm 37:7; Psalm 138:8; Matthew 11:28; Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 6

AGED PERSONS

Psalm 16:5-11; Psalm 71:16-24; Luke 2:29-32; II Timothy 4:7-8

SLEEPLESSNESS

Psalm 4:8; Psalm 30:5b; Psalm 46:10a; I Peter 5:7; I John 4:18

FEAR OF DEATH

Psalm 23:4; Romans 8:37-39; John 14:1ff; Isaiah 12:2; Psalm 46:1-4; Isaiah 41:10

HOPE AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Psalm 23; John 14:1-3; II Corinthians 5:1; I Corinthians 15:57; Revelation 21:4-5; Revelation 22:3-5

THANKSGIVING


CHILDBIRTH

Psalm 116:1-5; Psalm 127:3-5a; John 16:21-22; James 1:17; Mark 10:14-16; Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; II Corinthians 12:9a

Hymn

A hymn may appropriately be used on occasion, such as, O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go; Abide in Me; What a Friend We Have in Jesus, and others.

Prayer

A few suggested prayers are given. These will not be appropriate for all occasions, but may serve as models. Others may be found in the Treasury of Prayers under Special Intercessions.
BEFORE AN OPERATION

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we pray thee for this thy servant about to submit to surgery. Enable him, by thy Holy Spirit, to commit himself with perfect trust into thy keeping. Watch over him and protect him in the hours of darkness. Preserve him and his loved ones in the faith that is in Jesus Christ, who for us endured the cross. Bless and guide the surgeons and nurses who will tend him and give success to their work, that we may praise thee for thy goodness. And finally, O Lord, grant that thy servant may so live through this experience with cheerful courage that he may be the means of helping others in their time of trial; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Written for this Treasury.

FOR CONFIDENCE IN GOD

O Lord, by all thy dealings with us, whether of joy or pain, of light or darkness, let us be brought to thee. Let us value no treatment of thy grace simply because it makes us happy or because it makes us sad, because it gives us or denies us what we want; but may all that thou sendest us bring us to thee, that, knowing thy perfectness, we may be sure in every disappointment that thou art still loving us, and in every enforced idleness that thou art still using us; yea, in every death that thou art giving us life, as in his death thou didst give life to thy Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

FOR FREEDOM FROM ANXIETY

O God our Father, who willest us to give thanks for all things, to dread nothing but the loss of thee, and to cast all our cares on thee; thou who carest for us, preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is eternal and which thou dost manifest to us in Jesus Christ thy Son, our Lord. Hear us for his sake. Amen.

FOR HEALING

Almighty God, who are the giver of all health and the aid of them who turn to thee for help, we thank thee for the assurance of thy presence and the means that are given in this hospital for healing. Be with the doctors and nurses; grant them skill and wisdom; and give thy servant a spirit of cooperation and trust in thee. Grant that, by thy Holy Spirit, and
in thy good time, this thy servant N________ will be enabled to go upon his way rejoicing and to give thee continual thanks for thy sustaining providence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR THANKSGIVING

Most merciful God and Father, who art the source of all life, we praise thee for thy wonderful goodness; for the prayers of thy people; for having turned our heaviness into joy and our mourning into gladness by giving a measure of recovery. We thank thee that thou hast given thy servant patience and submission to thy will. Perfect, we pray thee, this thy mercy toward him and continue to prosper all that is used for his healing, and to thee be all the honor and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR A SURRENDERED LIFE

Father of mercies, God of all comfort, God of love and Author of life, in whom we live and move and have our being, do thou stay our minds on thee in hours of sickness and when we are beset by fears. Let us be still and know that thou art God. Quiet the multitude of our thoughts within us. Take from us all fret and care. Give us repose of spirit. Good Shepherd, make us to lie down in green pastures. Lead us beside still waters, and restore our souls. Hear us in this our prayer; through Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen.
ORDER FOR THE VISITATION OF THE DYING

Remembering the words of our Lord Jesus Christ when he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit," the minister may use the following words at the time of death:

As you depart out of this world, O Christian soul, may your rest this day be in peace and your dwelling place in the Paradise of God.

In the name of God the Father Almighty who created you,
In the name of Jesus Christ who redeemed you,
In the name of the Holy Spirit who sanctified you. Amen.

Prayer

The following prayer may be used.

Let us pray.

O sovereign Lord, who desirest not the death of a sinner, we pray thee to loose the spirit of this thy servant from every bond and to set him free from all evil so that he may rest with all thy saints in the eternal habitations; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

The following prayer may be used with the family after death has occurred.

Father of mercies and God of all comfort, look down in tender love and pity, we pray thee, on thy servants who mourn; so that, while they sorrow, they may not murmur or faint, but, remembering all thy mercies, thy promises, and thy love in Christ, may yield themselves into thy hands, to be taught and disciplined by thee. Fill their desolate hearts with thy love, that they may cleave more closely to thee, who bringest life out of death and canst turn their grief into eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
THE ORDER FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE

I
Excommunication

Beloved in the Lord, it is known to you that we have several times announced to you the sin committed and the offence given by our fellow member, N_________, to the end that he might by your admonition and prayers be brought to repentance. But we cannot conceal from you that he has shown no token of true repentance, but, on the contrary, in spite of the patience of the Church, daily aggravates his sin.

We are therefore now, according to the command of God in his holy Word, constrained with deep sorrow to proceed to the final step of discipline, in order that our erring brother may, if possible, be made ashamed of his sin and that God’s name may not be blasphemed in the Church.

Therefore we, the minister and elders of this church, do declare before that you, in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have excommunicated N________ from the Church of Christ and from the communion of the holy Sacraments and from the spiritual benefits which God bestows on his Church, so long as he shall impenitently persist in his sins.

Nevertheless, we exhort you, beloved Christians, to count him not as an enemy, but to admonish him at all times as a brother. And let every one take warning by this sad example to fear the Lord and diligently take heed unto himself. Knowing the wiles of the wicked one, let us guard against the beginnings of evil, and watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

Since we are assured that there is forgiveness with the Lord, that he may be feared, let us together call on him, with confession of our sins and supplication for his mercy.

Prayer
Readmission of the Penitent

Beloved in the Lord, it is known to you that some time ago we were constrained to separate our fellow member, \(N\)________, from the communion of the Church. We may now rejoice in the blessed results of Christian discipline, and thankfully announce that our brother desires to be readmitted into the following of Christ’s people. And whereas no one has alleged any reason why such readmission should not take place, we therefore now proceed to receive him again into the Church of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, having confirmed the sentence of his Church in the discipline of such as are impenitent, declares also that whatever his ministers loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, thereby teaching that those who may be cut off from his Church are not deprived of all hope of salvation, but may again by his grace be restored. Again he declares, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.” Therefore no one who truly repents may doubt that he is assuredly received by God in mercy.

I ask you therefore, \(N\)________, whether you do acknowledge before God and his Church that you are sincerely sorry for your sin and truly believe that the Lord has forgiven you; and are you desirous henceforth to live in all godliness?

*Answer:*

*Yes, truly.*

We then, here assembled in the name of the Lord, receive you again into the communion of the Church of Christ and of all its spiritual benefits; and may the eternal God preserve you and us therein to the end.

And you, beloved Christians, receive this your brother with hearty affection, and count him no longer as a stranger, but as a fellow citizen with the saints and of the household of God.

And let us together praise and magnify the Lord Almighty.

*Prayer*
THE ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF A MINISTER OF THE WORD

The Book of Church Order (Part II, Article 10, Section 5) directs the classis to appoint a time for the ordination service of candidates for the ministry and to conduct the service, in regular or special session, with proper solemnity. A sermon suitable to the occasion shall be preached.

If the candidate also is to be installed as the pastor and teacher of a congregation, the Book of Church Order further directs (Part I, Article 2, Section 2) that after a call has been approved by the classis and accepted by the person called, “the latter’s name shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays, so that opportunity may be afforded for the raising of lawful objections.” There being none, the classis shall proceed with the installation.

After the sermon has been preached, the presiding officer of the classis shall begin:

PRAYER

Let us pray.

O God, the great shepherd of the Church, who through the light of your Holy Spirit has always guided your people: grant that we, by the same Spirit, may live for you, and together with all whom you call to serve within the body of Christ, may be faithful and obedient to your Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITION

Beloved in the Lord, Holy Scripture teaches us that God our heavenly Father gathers to himself from among the lost children of this world a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace he is pleased to use our ministry. The Lord Jesus himself provides us with the grace we need to serve him, as affirmed by the Apostle Paul: “And his gifts were that some should 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.”

Ephesians 4:11-12

INTERROGATION

The presiding officer shall ask the candidate to stand before the congregation.
N. N. ____________________________________________,
the Classis of_______________________ has examined you and has found you to be
qualified as a person of sound learning and of Christian character, well suited to ex-
cercise the ministry of the Word within the Church of Christ. That it may be clear to
all here present that you are willing to accept this office and fulfill the ministry to
which you have been called, you are to answer sincerely to these questions:

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

I do.

The presiding officer shall invite the congregation to stand:

Let us all arise and stand with N________________ (use full name)
confessing our
Christian faith in the words of 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 at 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.

The congregation may be seated. The candidate shall remain standing.

______________________________ (use Christian name, omit surname),
do you believe in your heart that you are called by God’s Church, and therefore by
God, to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

I do so believe.

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 doctrines contrary thereto?

I do so believe.

Will you proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; will you from
the Word of God instruct, admonish, comfort, and reprove, according to everyone’s
need; and uphold the witness of holy Scripture against all schisms and heresies?
I will, the Lord being my helper.

Will you call upon the name of the Lord for and with the whole congregation; administer the sacraments according to his command; share responsibility for the mutual Christian growth of all members of the congregation; and exercise Christian love and discipline?

I will, the Lord being my helper.

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

I will, the Lord being my helper.

ORDINATION

The candidate shall then kneel. The presiding officer shall ask the members of classis to come forward. Those the classis shall invite may join in the laying on of hands. The presiding officer shall say:

The Lord Jesus prayed on behalf of his disciples: “Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.”

John 17:11, 17-19

Let us pray. Almighty God, who through Jesus Christ calls from among us those who carry out the ministry of the Word, enlighten your servant with your Spirit, strengthen him her with your hand; and so govern him her that his her life and labor may be to the glory of your name and the advancement of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The presiding officer shall say to the candidate:

N__________________________ (use Christian name, omit surname), by the authority given to his Church by our Lord Jesus Christ, we ordain you minister of the Word, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with you always. Amen.
ORATION AND SIGNING OF THE FORM OF DECLARATION

The candidate, having received ordination, shall stand and read aloud the “Form of the Declaration for Ministers” and sign the book containing the declaration. If a symbol of the ministry (such as a Bible or pulpit robe) is to be presented, it should be given at this time. Those who participate in the laying on of hands shall extend the right hand of fellowship before returning to their places with the members of classis. The candidate shall remain standing for the charge.

CHARGE TO THE MINISTER

The person designated by the classis shall deliver the charge. The charge which follows shall be read, but an additional brief exhortation, if authorized by the classis, may be made before it.

Beloved fellow servant in Christ, be attentive to the flock whom the Holy Spirit may give you to shepherd and teach, and to all those among whom you shall labor. Love Christ, and feed his sheep. “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all—especially of those who believe. Command and teach those things. Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have. Practice these duties, devote yourself to them.”  

I Timothy 4:10-15

In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.  

I Timothy 6:13-16

If the service is also one of installation, omit the following indented material.

The presiding officer shall say:

PRAYER FOR GRACE

Let us pray.

The prayer may be spoken by the whole congregation.

Most merciful God, we thank you for the service you call us to render within the Church of Christ, and for the commission to proclaim the gospel to all the world. We ask you continually to strengthen
N (use Christian name, omit surname) by your Holy Spirit, for the ministry to which you have chosen and called him her. Enlighten his her understanding, endow him her with wisdom and courage, speak to him her that he she may boldly make known the gospel. Grant him her the grace to savor the joys of ministry in Christ’s name along with the patience to bear the difficulties and trials which may come, that being sustained by your spirit he she may remain steadfast, always rejoicing in the words of our Lord, who promised his disciples, “I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

For a service of ordination only there may follow the GENERAL PRAYERS, and the LORD’S PRAYER, unless it has been used already in the service. A HYMN of Thanksgiving may be sung after which the newly ordained minister shall deliver the BENEDICTION.

INSTALLATION

The classis may authorize the presiding officer or other designated person to deliver a brief EXHORTATION TO THE CONGREGATION after which the presiding officer shall say:

AFFIRMATION BY THE CONGREGATION

Will all those within the fellowship of (name of the church) rise and make their affirmation of the minister whom God has given them?

When the members of the congregation have risen, the presiding officer shall continue:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, do you receive in the name of the Lord, this his servant N (use Christian name, omit surname) to be your pastor and teacher?

In the Lord’s name we receive him her and make this pledge: To receive with meekness and love the word of truth he she proclaims, and to submit with confidence and good cheer to the pastoral care he she provides in Christ’s service. We promise and pledge our encouragement and prayers, our participation and labor, as together we do the work of the Church. We promise that we will furnish him her such financial and personal care as will enable him her to do his her work joyfully and productively, as long as our pastoral relationship continues.

The Lord bless you and pour out his Spirit to strengthen you, that you may keep these vows in the name of Christ and to his glory. Amen.

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF A MINISTER OF THE WORD, 1987
DECLARATION

The people and the candidate may be seated. The presiding officer shall then say:

In the name and by the authority of the Classis of _________________________
I now declare that the pastoral relationship between the Reverend ___(using full name) and the ______ (name of the church) is fully constituted, and that the Reverend ________________ (using full name) is the lawfully installed pastor and teacher of this church.

PRAYER FOR GRACE

Let us pray.

The prayer may be spoken by the whole congregation.

Most merciful God, we thank you for the service you call us to render within the Church of Christ, and for the commission to proclaim the gospel to all the world. We ask you continually to strengthen N___ (use Christian name, omit surname) by your Holy Spirit, for the ministry to which you have chosen and called him her. Enlighten his her understanding, endow him her with wisdom and courage, speak to him her that he she may boldly make known the gospel. Grant him her the grace to savor the joys of ministry in Christ’s name along with the patience to bear the difficulties and trials which may come, that being sustained by your spirit, he she may remain steadfast, always rejoicing in the words of the Lord, who promised his disciples, “I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Then may follow the GENERAL PRAYERS, and the LORD’S PRAYER, unless it has been used already in the service. A HYMN of Thanksgiving may be sung after which the newly ordained and installed minister shall deliver the BENEDICTION.
The Book of Church Order (Part I, Article 2, Section 2) directs that, after a call to a minister of the Word to the pastorate of a church has been approved by the classis and accepted by the minister, the name of the person so called “shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays, so that opportunity may be afforded for the raising of lawful objections.” There being none, the Book of Church Order further directs (Part II, Article 10, Sections 2 and 5) that the classis shall install the minister of the Word into his/her office.

This order is intended for use when a minister of the Word is to be installed as pastor and teacher of a congregation. Installation into other appropriate ministries should be conducted in accordance with the DIRECTORY FOR THE RECEPTION INTO THE CLASSIS AND INSTALLATION INTO A SPECIALIZED MINISTRY.

After the Approach to God and a proclamation of The Word of God in Scripture reading and sermon, the presiding officer of classis shall begin:

PRAYER

Let us pray.

O God, the great shepherd of the church, who through the light of your Holy Spirit has always guided your people: grant that we, by the same Spirit, may live for you, and together with all whom you call to serve within the body of Christ, may be faithful and obedient to your Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITION

Beloved in the Lord, Holy Scripture teaches us that God our heavenly Father gathers to himself from among the lost children of this world a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace he is pleased to use our ministry. The Lord Jesus himself provides us with the grace we need to serve him, as affirmed by the Apostle Paul: “and his gifts were that some should 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.”

Ephesians 4:11-12
RECEPTION INTO THE CLASSIS

PRESENTATION AND INTERROGATION OF THE CANDIDATE

The presiding officer shall say:

Will the Reverend __________________________ (using full name) now rise and stand before the classis and this congregation.

When the candidate has done so, the presiding officer continues:

N __________________________ (use Christian name, omit surname), the Classis of Church of __________________________ has approved the Call issued to you by the _______________ to be their pastor and teacher. You stand before us now in order that you may be received into the membership of the classis and installed into the new ministry to which you have been called. So that it may be clear to all here present that you are both willing and able to exercise the ministry of the Word within the Church of Christ, I call upon you to reaffirm the vows made when you were ordained a minister of the Word: Do you believe in your heart that you are called by God’s church, and therefore by God, to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

I do so believe.

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 doctrines contrary thereto?

I do so believe.

Will you proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; will you from the Word of God instruct, admonish, comfort, and reprove, according to everyone’s need; and uphold the witness of holy Scripture against all schisms and heresies?

I will, the Lord being my helper.

Will you call upon the name of the Lord for and with the whole congregation; administer the sacraments according to his command; share responsibility for the mutual Christian growth of all members of the congregation; and exercise Christian love and discipline?

I will, the Lord being my helper.
Will you be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America, accepting its order and discipline, using all your abilities to further its Christian mission, here and throughout the world?

I will, the Lord being my helper.

Will you declare all these things publicly and make your commitment to a Christian ministry among us?

_The candidate shall respond by reading aloud the “Form of the Declaration for Ministers” after which he/she shall sign the book containing the declaration._

WELCOME

_The presiding officer shall welcome the candidate using these words or some other suitable greeting after which he/she and such other officers or members of the classis as may have been appointed may extend the right hand of fellowship to the new member._

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, we welcome you into our fellowship and pledge to you our confidence, support, and affection as you live and work among us as a fellow servant and minister of the Word of God.

INSTALLATION

STATEMENT ON THE CONGREGATION’S MINISTRY

_The new member and other members of classis may return to their places, after which the presiding officer or an elder from the calling congregation appointed by him/her may make a brief STATEMENT regarding the nature and/or heritage of the congregation so as to reveal something of the direction in which God may be calling it to go during the future, after which the presiding officer shall ask the candidate to stand before the body and inquire:_

ACCEPTANCE BY THE MINISTER

In accepting the call issued by the _____________ Church of ________________, you have already acknowledged your willingness to serve God as their pastor and teacher. Do you now affirm publicly your acceptance of that office?

I do.
The candidate may make a further brief statement in his/her own words, facing and addressing both classis and congregation.

ACCEPTANCE BY THE CONGREGATION

The presiding officer shall call upon the congregation to rise.

Will all those within the fellowship of __________________________ (name of the church) rise and make their affirmation of the minister whom God has given them?

When the members of the congregation have risen, the presiding officer shall continue:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, do you receive in the name of the Lord, this his servant N____ (use Christian name, omit surname) to be your pastor and teacher?

In the Lord’s name we receive him her, and make this pledge: to receive with meekness and love the word of truth he she proclaims, and to submit with confidence and good cheer to the pastoral care he she provides in Christ’s service. We promise and pledge our encouragement and prayers, our participation and labor, as together we do the work of the Church. We promise that we will furnish him her such financial and personal care as will enable him her to do his her work joyfully and productively, as long as our pastoral relationship continues.

The Lord bless you and pour out his Spirit to strengthen you, that you may keep these vows in the name of Christ and to his glory. Amen.

Brief, scriptural charges may be made to the minister-elect and the congregation.

The presiding officer shall then declare:

DECLARATION OF INSTALLATION

In the name and by the authority of the Classis of __________________________ (name of the church)

I now declare that the pastoral relationship between the Reverend ______ (using full name)
and the __________________________ (name of the church) is fully constituted, and the Reverend ______ (using full name) is the lawfully installed pastor and teacher of this church. Let us call upon the name of the Lord.

PRAYER FOR GRACE

Let us pray.
Most merciful God, we thank you for the service you call us to render within the Church of Christ and for the commission to proclaim the gospel to all the world. We ask you to continually strengthen [Christian name, omit surname] by your Holy Spirit for the ministry to which you have chosen and called him/her. Enlighten his/her understanding; endow him/her with wisdom and courage; speak to him/her that he/she may boldly make known the gospel. Grant him/her the grace to savor the joys of ministry in Christ’s name along with the patience to bear the difficulties and trials which may come, that being sustained by your Spirit, he/she may remain steadfast, always rejoicing in the words of the Lord, who promised his disciples, “I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Give your grace also to this congregation, set apart for the ministry that becomes God’s people. Strengthen them as they work together in your Church; enlighten them through the proclamation of your Word so that they may be indeed what you called them to be through the Apostle Peter: “...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Amen.

Then may follow the GENERAL PRAYERS, and the LORD’S PRAYER, unless it has been used already in the service. A HYMN of thanksgiving may be sung after which the newly ordained and installed minister shall deliver the:

BENEDICTION
DIRECTORY FOR RECEPTION INTO THE CLASSIS AND INSTALLATION INTO A SPECIALIZED MINISTRY

The classis shall appoint a time for a service of worship during which praise and prayer shall be offered, the Word of God read and a sermon preached, after which the Order specified below shall take place.

PRAYER: The presiding officer of classis or a person designated by the officer shall lead the congregation in a prayer asking for God’s blessing upon the assembly.

EXPOSITION: The presiding officer shall give a brief exposition of the divine call to ministry, using the text Ephesians 4:11-12 or another appropriate portion of Scripture.

PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATE: The presiding officer shall call the candidate to stand before the congregation for the purpose of being received into the classis (if he/she is not already a member) and being installed into his/her office.

INTERROGATION: The presiding officer shall ask the candidate to reaffirm his/her ordination vows. After receiving a positive oral response, the presiding officer shall ask the candidate if he/she is willing to declare his/her faith publicly and make a renewed commitment to perform a Christian ministry as a member of the classis.

READING AND SIGNING OF THE FORM OF DECLARATION: The candidate shall reply to the presiding officer’s questions by reading the Form of the Declaration for Ministers and affixing his/her name to a book containing the declaration.

WELCOME: The presiding officer and such other officers or members of the classis as may be appointed shall welcome the candidate as a minister member of the classis with a greeting and the extending of the right hand of fellowship.

STATEMENT OF THE NATURE OF THE MINISTRY: A brief statement regarding the nature of the particular ministry and the duties pertaining to it which the minister may be called upon to perform may be read by the presiding officer, or by a person appointed to do so, after which the following affirmations shall be made.
ACCEPTANCE OF THE OFFICE BY THE CANDIDATE: The president shall ask the minister if he/she is willing to affirm publicly his/her acceptance of the office. The minister shall make a brief reply using his/her own words.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE CANDIDATE: If there are persons present who will be taking an active role in this ministry, the presiding officer shall ask them to stand to affirm their willingness to accept the minister God has given them and to participate in ministry with him/her as God may lead them.

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.

CHARGES: Brief, scriptural charges may be made to the minister-elect and, if present, to those participating in the ministry.

DECLARATION OF INSTALLATION: The presiding officer shall make a declaration using this form: “In the name and by the authority of the Classis of ______, I declare that the Reverend ___________________________ (using full name) is duly installed _________ (into the particular ministry).”

PRAYERS: A prayer for grace may be offered and the general prayers made, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer unless it has been used previously in the service.

BENEDICTION: The newly installed minister may pronounce the blessing concluding the service.

NOTE: Appropriate HYMNS may be sung during the Order, if desired. It is suggested that these be included before the Statement of the Nature of the Ministry and/or before the Benediction.
THE ORDER FOR THE ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF A MINISTER OR MISSIONARY

The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Article 8, Sec. 19d) directs that the name of a candidate for ordination or installation shall be published on three successive Lord’s Days. In the case of a candidate who is not to be installed at the time in a particular congregation, but is to be ordained to the Ministry, such publication should be made in the congregation in which the ordination is to take place.

After the sermon and the Prayer for a Blessing on the Word, the service proceeds as follows.

Hymn

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who hast given Jesus Christ thy Son to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, and who by thy Word and Spirit hast numbered us among thy people, pour out upon us, we pray thee, the gift of thy Holy Spirit, that we, being cleansed from our sins, may be kept in faith and obedience to thy Word; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or,

Almighty God, who, through the preaching of the Word, hast caused the light of the blessed Gospel to shine throughout the world, grant us, we pray thee, thy presence and favor in all that we do at this present time; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Exposition

Beloved Brethren, it is known to you that we have at three different times published the name of our brother, here present, to learn whether any person had anything to offer concerning his life or doctrine, why he might not be ordained to the ministry of the Word [and installed as pastor and teacher}
of this congregation], or, [and set apart as a missionary of the Cross]. Since nothing of Scriptural import has been alleged against him, we shall therefore in the name of the Lord proceed to invest him with this sacred office.

Holy Scripture teaches us that God, our heavenly Father, gathers to himself from among the lost children of men a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace he is pleased to use the ministry of men. The Lord Jesus provided, as St. Paul writes, that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11, 12

It is evident from Scripture that the responsibility of the minister of God’s Word is threefold:

To proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; from the Word of the Lord to instruct, admonish, comfort, and reprove according to everyone’s need; and to refute with the holy Scriptures all schisms and heresies contrary to pure doctrine;

To call upon the name of the Lord on behalf of the whole congregation; to administer, according to the command of Christ to his Apostles and through them to all his ministers, the Sacraments which the Lord has instituted as seals of his grace; and to care for the flock of Christ;

To govern the Church of God in such manner as the Lord has ordained. Christ in speaking of Christian discipline said to his Apostles, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16:19

The office of the Christian ministry is both glorious and necessary, and the Lord will have such an office always to remain; for he said when he sent forth his Apostles, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Matthew 28:20

Interrogation

*Here the candidate shall present himself before the presiding minister.*

That it may appear to all here present that you, our brother, are willing to
accept this office as thus described, you are to answer sincerely these questions:

Do you feel in your heart that you are called of God’s Church, and therefore of God himself, to this holy ministry?

Do you believe the books of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and the perfect doctrine of salvation; and do you reject all doctrines contrary thereto?

Do you promise to discharge your office faithfully according to this doctrine and to adorn it with a godly life; also to submit yourself, in case you should become delinquent either in life or doctrine, to ecclesiastical admonition, according to the ordinance of our Church?

Do you promise to be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America, using your utmost endeavor to further her mission at home and abroad?

Will you, with the help of God, strive to fulfill all the duties of a minister of Christ; preaching the Word of God in sincerity; administering the holy Sacraments in purity; maintaining proper discipline in the house of God; and shepherding the flock faithfully? What is your response?

The candidate shall then respond:

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

Ordination

The candidate shall then kneel and the presiding minister and other ministers who are present shall lay their hands on his head. Since ordination to the ministry is a prerogative of Classis, ordinarily only ministers of the ordaining Classis will take part in the laying on of hands. The presiding minister shall then say:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who calls men to this holy office, enlighten thy servant with thy Spirit; strengthen him with thy hand; and so govern him in thy ministry that he may decently and fruitfully walk therein, to the glory of thy name and the advancement of thy kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
The presiding minister shall then say:

Take thou, N__________ (here he shall name the candidate), authority to execute the office of minister of the Word; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Declaration

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority which he has given to his Church, I now declare you to be duly ordained to the office of the holy ministry.

The candidate shall then stand.

Charge to the Minister

To be read by the presiding minister or some other minister designated by Classis.

Take heed, beloved brother and fellow servant in Christ, to yourself [and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit makes you overseer] (or if the ordination is to missionary service) [and to those among whom you shall labor]. Love Christ and feed his sheep. Be an example in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Attend to reading, to exhortation, to teaching.

Neglect not the gift that is in you. Meditate on these things; give yourself wholly to them. Take heed to the doctrine and continue steadfast therein. Bear patiently all sufferings as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ; for in doing this you shall both save yourself and them that hear you. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

This charge is constitutionally sufficient. If, however, an additional word of exhortation to the minister is authorized by the Classis, it shall be said here.

If the service is one of ordination only, it is concluded with the following Prayer, General Prayers, the Lord’s Prayer, Hymn, and Benediction.

If the service is also one of installation, the Prayer shall be omitted and the presiding minister shall proceed to interrogate the congregation.
Prayer

Merciful Father, we thank thee that it has pleased thee to gather to thyself from among the lost children of men a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace thou dost use the ministry of men. We pray thee to qualify this thy servant more and more, by thy Holy Spirit, for the ministry to which thou hast chosen and called him. Enlighten his understanding to comprehend thy holy Word. Give him utterance that he may boldly make known thy Gospel. Endue him with wisdom and courage. Grant him patience to bear the difficulties and troubles in his ministry and mission that, being strengthened by thy Spirit, he may remain steadfast to the end and be received into the joy of his Lord; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

General Prayers

Hymn

Benediction

Interrogation of the Congregation

The presiding minister shall request the members of the congregation to stand and shall proceed to interrogate them as follows:

Beloved in the Lord, inasmuch as this most solemn procedure involves obligations and duties on your part toward him whom you have called to minister to you in holy things, I ask you before God and our Lord Jesus Christ:

Do you receive in the name of the Lord his servant, our brother, to be your minister?

Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his lips with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due discharge of his holy office?

Do you promise to encourage and help him in his sacred work, and to labor with him in faith and prayer for the honor of Christ, the well-being of his Church, and the welfare of men?

Do you promise that, as long as he remains your minister, you will provide competent worldly maintenance and whatever else the honor of religion and his comfort among you require? What is your response?
The congregation shall then respond:

We do.

Charge to the Congregation

The members of the congregation being seated, the following is to be read by the presiding minister or some other minister designated by Classis.

Beloved in the Lord, receive this your minister in the Lord with gladness and hold such men in reputation. Remember that God himself speaks to you and appeals to you through him. Receive the Word which he, according to to Scripture, shall preach to you, not as the word of man but, as it is in truth, the Word of God. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief. If you do these things, it shall come to pass that the peace of God shall enter into your houses; and that you who receive this man in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and through his preaching, believing in Christ, shall through Christ inherit life eternal.

This charge is constitutionally sufficient. If, however, an additional word of exhortation is authorized by the Classis, it shall be said here.

Declaration

The presiding minister shall then say:

In the name and by the authority of the Classis of ________ I now declare that the pastoral relation between the Reverend _______ (using the full name) and the Church of _________ is fully constituted, that the Reverend _______ (using his full name) is the lawfully installed pastor and teacher of this church.

Since no man is of himself sufficient for these things, let us call upon God with prayer and thanksgiving.

Prayer for Grace

Let us pray.
Merciful Father, we thank thee that it has pleased thee to gather to thyself from among the lost children of men a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace thou dost use the ministry of men. We bless thee for graciously providing the church in this place with a faithful minister. We pray thee to qualify him daily more and more, by thy Holy Spirit, for the ministry to which thou hast chosen and called him. Enlighten his understanding to comprehend thy holy Word. Give him utterance that he may boldly and faithfully proclaim thy Gospel. Endue him with wisdom to govern aright the people over whom he is set and preserve them in Christian peace. Grant him patience to bear the difficulties and troubles which he may meet in his ministry that, being strengthened by thy Spirit, he may remain steadfast to the end and be received with all thy faithful servants into the joy of his Lord.

Give thy grace also to this people and congregation that they may bear themselves aright toward their minister; that they may acknowledge him to be sent of thee; that they may receive his word with all reverence and submit themselves to his exhortations; to the end that they may, by his word, believing in Christ, be made partakers of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

General Prayers

*The General Prayers should be concluded with the Lord’s Prayer if it has not been previously used in the Order.*

Hymn

Benediction
THE ORDER FOR
INSTALLATION OF A MINISTER

The Constitution (18d.) of the Church directs that on three successive Lord’s Days the name of a candidate for installation shall be published in the church over which he is to be installed.

After the sermon and prayer for a blessing on the Word, the presiding minister shall begin thus:

The Invocation

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who hast given Jesus Christ thy Son to be Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, and who by thy Word and Spirit hast numbered us among thy people; pour out upon us, we pray thee, the gift of thy Holy Spirit, that we, being cleansed from our sins, may be kept in faith and obedience to thy Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Exposition

Beloved Brethren, it is known to you that we have at three different times published the name of our brother, here present, to learn whether any person had anything to offer concerning his life or doctrine, why he might not be installed as the pastor and teacher of this congregation. Since nothing of Scriptural import has been alleged against him, we shall therefore in the name of the Lord proceed to invest him with this sacred office.

Holy Scripture teaches us that God, our heavenly Father, gathers to himself from among the lost children of men a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace he is pleased to use the ministry of men. The Lord Jesus provided, as St. Paul writes, that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11, 12

It is evident from Scripture that the responsibility of the minister of God’s Word is threefold:
To proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; from the Word of the Lord to instruct, admonish, comfort, and reprove according to everyone’s need; and to refute with the holy Scriptures all schisms and heresies contrary to pure doctrine;

To call upon the name of the Lord on behalf of the whole congregation; to administer the Sacraments which the Lord has instituted as seals of his grace, as is evident from the command given by Christ to the Apostles and through them to all his ministers; and to care for the flock of Christ;

To govern the Church of God in such manner as the Lord has ordained. For Christ, in speaking of Christian discipline, said to his Apostles, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16:19

Interrogation

*Here the candidate shall present himself before the presiding minister.*

That it may appear to all here present that you, our brother, are willing to accept this office as thus described, you are to answer sincerely these questions:

Do you feel in your heart that you are called of God’s Church, and therefore of God himself, to this holy ministry?

Do you believe the books of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and the perfect doctrine of salvation; and do you reject all doctrines contrary thereto?

Do you promise to discharge your office faithfully according to this doctrine and to adorn it with a godly life; also to submit yourself, in case you should become delinquent either in life or doctrine, to ecclesiastical admonition, according to the ordinance of our Church?

Do you promise to be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America, using your utmost endeavor to further her mission at home and abroad?

Will you, with the help of God, strive to fulfill all the duties of a minister
of Christ: preaching the Word of God in sincerity; administering the holy Sacraments in purity; maintaining proper discipline in the house of God; and shepherding the flock faithfully?

The candidate shall then respond:

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

Charge to the Minister

To be read by the presiding minister or some other minister designated by Classis.

Take heed, beloved brother and fellow servant in Christ, to yourself and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit makes you overseer. Love Christ and feed his sheep. Be an example in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Attend to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Neglect not the gift that is in you. Meditate on these things; give yourself wholly to them. Take heed to the doctrine and continue steadfast therein. Bear patiently all sufferings as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ; for in doing this you shall both save yourself and them that hear you. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

This charge is constitutionally sufficient. If, however, an additional word of exhortation to the minister is authorized by the Classis, it shall be said here.

Interrogation of the Congregation

The presiding minister shall request the members of the church to stand and shall proceed to interrogate them as follows:

Beloved in the Lord, inasmuch as this most solemn procedure involves obligations and duties on your part toward him whom you have called to minister to you in holy things, I ask you before God and our Lord Jesus Christ:

Do you receive in the name of the Lord his servant, our brother, to be your minister?

Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his lips with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due discharge of his holy office?
Do you promise to encourage and help him in his sacred work, and to labor with him in faith and prayer for the honor of Christ, the well-being of his Church, and the welfare of men?

Do you promise that, as long as he remains your minister, you will provide competent worldly maintenance and whatever else the honor of religion and his comfort among you require?

To these questions, what is your answer?

We do.

Charge to the Congregation

*The members of the congregation being seated, the following is to be read by the presiding minister or some other minister designated by Classis.*

Beloved in the Lord, receive this your minister in the Lord with gladness and hold such men in reputation. Remember that God himself speaks unto you and appeals to you through him. Receive the Word which he, according to Scripture, shall preach to you, not as the word of man but, as it is in truth, the Word of God. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief. If you do these things, it shall come to pass that the peace of God shall enter into your houses; and that you who receive this man in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and through his preaching, believing in Christ, shall through Christ inherit life eternal.

This charge is constitutionally sufficient. If, however, an additional word of exhortation is authorized by the Classis, it shall be said here.

Declaration

*The presiding minister shall then say:*  

In the name and by the authority of the Classis of ________ I now declare that the pastoral relation between the Reverend ________ (using his full name) and the Church of ________ is fully constituted, that the Reverend ________ (using his full name) is the lawfully installed pastor and teacher of this congregation.
Since no man is of himself sufficient for these things, let us call upon God with prayer and thanksgiving.

**Prayer for Grace**

Merciful Father, we thank thee that it has pleased thee to gather to thyself from among the lost children of men a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace thou dost use the ministry of men. We bless thee for graciously providing the church in this place with a faithful minister.

We pray thee to qualify him daily more and more, by thy Holy Spirit, for the ministry to which thou hast chosen and called him. Enlighten his understanding to comprehend thy holy Word. Give him utterance that he may boldly and faithfully proclaim thy Gospel. Endue him with wisdom to govern the people over whom he is set. Grant him patience to bear the difficulties and troubles which he may meet in his ministry; that, being strengthened by the comfort of thy Spirit, he may remain steadfast to the end and be received with all faithful servants into the joy of his Lord.

Give thy grace also to this people and preserve them in peace: that they may bear themselves aright toward their minister; that they may acknowledge him to be sent of thee; that they may receive his word with all reverence and submit themselves to his exhortations; to the end they may, by his word, believing in Christ, be made partakers of eternal life. Hear us, O Father, through thy beloved Son. Amen.

**General Prayers**

_The General Prayers should be concluded with the Lord’s Prayer if it has not been previously used in the Order._

**Hymn**

**Benediction**
THE ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION
OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

The respective ecclesiastical duties and powers of elders and deacons are laid down in the Book of Church Order (Part 1, Article 1, Sec. 7 and 9). These shall be made known to the congregation prior to their election and these officers shall acquaint themselves therewith. Their civil powers vary under the laws of different states.

The BCO (Part 1, Article 2, Sec. 10) directs that the names of elders and deacons-elect shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays preceding their installation in order that lawful objections may be considered.

After an Approach to God, a proclamation of the Word of God, and the reception of the gifts and offerings of the people, the presiding minister shall begin:

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, who by your Holy Spirit guided the councils of the blessed Apostles and promised, through your Son Jesus Christ, to be with your Church to the end of the world, look upon us in mercy and direct us by your Holy Spirit that what we do at this time may result in the welfare of your kingdom, the building up of your people, and the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITION

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you have chosen from among its members persons here present to serve as elders and deacons in this church. Their names have been published several times, and since there is no scriptural reason why they may not be installed into their offices, we shall now proceed in the name of the Lord.

Jesus Christ is the head of his church, which is made up of many members with a variety of gifts. The purpose of these gifts is that the whole church may confess that he is Lord and serve in his name. To enable all of us to do this, he gives particular gifts to some. To the pastor he gives gifts for the ministry of the Word and sacraments; to elders for the ministry of government and discipline; and to deacons for the ministry of compassion and material maintenance. As these ministries are united in Christ, so they are exercised jointly in the church.
Scripture teaches that those chosen to the office of elder are called along with pastors to encourage spiritual growth among the members and help them to walk in the way of Christ. Scripture also teaches that deacons are responsible for the ministry of compassion and material maintenance, representing God’s love and mercy in Christ.

By bringing together the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon, the consistory continues the full ministry of Christ in our day. Everything is done decently and in order in the church when faithful persons are chosen for and responsibly carry out these offices.

*The presiding minister may recognize by name those persons who have completed their terms of service as elders and deacons, thanking them on behalf of the congregation.*

**PRESENTATION AND INTERROGATION**

*The presiding minister shall say:*

The congregation has elected ________________________________

______________________________

______________________________

(full names)

to fill these offices. I now ask you to stand before us.

*When the candidates have done so, the presiding minister continues:*

That all may know your willingness to accept these responsibilities, I ask you to answer the following questions:

Do you reaffirm the vows you made when you confessed your faith in Christ and became a communicant member of his Church?

*I do.*

Do you believe in your heart that you are called by God’s Church and therefore by God himself to your respective office?

*I do.*

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 doctrines contrary thereto?
I do.

I ask you who have been elected elders, will you oversee and encourage the spiritual growth of the congregation; providing for the proclamation and hearing of God’s Word, the reverent celebration of sacraments, and the loving discipline of the members?

I will, with the help of God.

I ask you who have been elected deacons, will you manifest the love and care of Christ; gathering and distributing the offerings of his people, giving personal attention to the distressed, and exercising good stewardship over the goods and property of the congregation?

I will, with the help of God.

Will you, elders and deacons, be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America and do your best to further her mission at home and abroad?

I will.

ORDINATION

If any have not previously been ordained to the office into which they are to be installed, they shall kneel before the presiding minister. All who have been ordained to the office may join the presiding minister in the laying on of hands. During the laying on of hands, the presiding minister shall say:

N____________________, by the authority given to his Church by our Lord Jesus Christ, we ordain you elder deacon, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER

The presiding minister shall offer the following prayer on behalf of all the candidates:

Let us pray.

Most merciful God, who called these persons to these high offices, enlighten them with your Spirit, strengthen them with your hand, and so govern them that their life and labor may be to the glory of your name and the advancement of your kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

INTERROGATION OF THE CONGREGATION

The presiding minister shall ask the elders- and deacons-elect to face the people and the members of the congregation to rise. When they have done so, the minister shall say:

Do you, the members of this congregation, receive these persons as elders and deacons in Christ’s church?

We do.

Will you respect them for the sake of the offices they bear, and promise to walk in the way of the Lord, faithfully heeding Jesus Christ and these servants who represent him?

We will.

The Lord bless you and multiply his grace to enable you to fulfill your promises.

Amen.

DECLARATION

The presiding minister shall ask the elders and deacons to turn about and address them.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, I declare that you are now ordained and duly installed in your respective offices, and commend you to the grace of God which will enable you to discharge all your duties. The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

Amen.

EXHORTATION

The congregation and the new officers may be seated. The presiding minister shall address first the new officers and then the members of the congregation saying:
Elders and deacons, I call upon you to be faithful in performing your duties, to magnify the Lord and show zeal for his church, for which he shed his own blood.

Brothers and sisters, receive these persons as you would receive Christ. Support them in love, that their work may be productive, and together we may serve the Lord and experience his blessings. Let us pray for one another that each may obtain whatever grace we need to fulfill our duties.

The following or a similar prayer may be offered at this point or incorporated in the General Prayers.

Let us pray.

Almighty and merciful God, of whose help and guidance we always stand in need, bestow upon your servants such gifts as are necessary for them in their respective ministries. Give grace to them that they may serve you faithfully in this life and finally enter into the joy of the life to come.

Grant your grace also to your people whom they serve, so that all of us may fulfill our ministry, magnifying your name and increasing the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ; in whose name we pray. Amen.

Then may follow the GENERAL PRAYERS and the LORD’S PRAYER, unless it has been used already in the service. A HYMN of Thanksgiving may be sung. The service shall conclude with the BLESSING.
THE ORDER FOR ORDINATION AND
INSTALLATION
OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

The respective ecclesiastical duties and powers of elders and deacons are laid down in The Constitution of the Reformed Church in America (Articles 6 and 7) and those officers should acquaint themselves therewith. Their civil powers vary under the laws of different States.

The Constitution (Article 8, Sec. 6a) directs that the names of all elders and deacons elect shall be published from the pulpit of their congregation on three successive Lord’s Days, so that any lawful objections by competent persons may be interposed.

Elders and deacons may be re-elected, but should not be re-ordained. In such cases, the following Order shall be considered only as an installation.

Since elders and deacons are officers of the Word, they may be ordained or installed on the appointed Lord’s Day. After the Doxology in the first Order of Worship the service proceeds.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, who by thy Holy Spirit guided the councils of the blessed Apostles and promised, through thy Son Jesus Christ, to be with thy Church to the end of the world, look mercifully on us and so direct us by thy Holy Spirit that what we do at this time may be to the welfare of thy kingdom, to the building up of thy people in love and righteousness, and to the glory of thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Exposition

Beloved in the Lord, we have several times published to you the names of our brethren here present, who have been chosen to the office of elders and deacons in this church, to know whether anyone had anything to charge against them why they should not be inducted into their respective offices. Since nothing of Scriptural import has been alleged against any one of them, we shall now proceed in the name of the Lord.
The Church of Jesus Christ, of which he is the chief Shepherd and only Head, is composed of many members who have a diversity of gifts for the confession of his name and the service of one another. Although all the members are called to these tasks, some are furnished with gifts for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, others for the ministry of government and discipline, and still others for the ministry of mercy and material oversight.

*I Corinthians 12:4-6; I Corinthians 12:18-28; The Heidelberg Catechism Answer 55f*

The Reformed Church has maintained these ministries in the offices of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon. Since there is a unity of these offices in Christ himself, so also in the Church the one office is not to be separated from the others. The elder does not serve without the minister of the Word and neither without the deacon.

Concerning the office of the elder, Scripture teaches that those chosen to this office are called, together with the ministers of the Word, to take the spiritual oversight of the church which is committed to them, and to look diligently whether every member of the church lives in the way of Christ (Acts 20:28); to admonish those who behave themselves unbecoming the Gospel of Christ (Acts 20:31; Colossians 3:16); to prevent as much as possible the Sacraments from being profaned (I Corinthians 14:27-32); and to act according to Christian discipline against the impenitent, and to receive the penitent again into the fellowship of the Church (Matthew 16:19). Scripture teaches in many places that these responsibilities are not entrusted to one or two persons only, but to many who are ordained to this oversight (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

The elders, in all occurrences which relate to the welfare and order of the Church, are also to assist with their good counsel the minister of the Word; and to serve all Christians with advice, consolation, and encouragement. The elders are particularly enjoined to have regard to the teaching and conduct of the minister of the Word, to the end that all things be directed to the upbuilding of the church, and that no strange doctrine be taught. For the performance of this responsibility the elders are charged to study diligently the Word of God.

Concerning the office of the deacon, Scripture teaches that those first chosen to this office were men of faith and wisdom, who were to make the ministry of mercy and material oversight their particular responsibility (Acts 6:16).
As ministers of God’s love and mercy in Jesus Christ, their task is to continue our Lord’s manifold deeds of mercy; to gather, by good means, gifts and offerings for the Lord’s treasury, and to care for these with greatest fidelity; to distribute these with wisdom and compassion to persons in need and to causes which rightly look to the Church for help (Romans 13:8, 13); to visit and comfort the distressed; to give attention and care to all the beneivolences of the congregation; to provide for whatever necessities may arise from time to time in relation to the Church and cause of Christ in general; and to assist the congregation at services of worship.

The elders with the deacons in consistory are to attend to all matters of temporal oversight in the church; provide for the support of the minister; and to exercise a careful stewardship of all funds, good, and properties of the congregation. The three offices of elder, deacon, and minister of the Word, being joined together in the consistory, thus continue within the Church the unity of these offices in Christ, as so many branches flourishing on the same Vine. In this manner, all things in the Church will be done decently and in order, when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed in the Word of God (I Corinthians 14:40).

**Interrogation of the Officers Elect**

*The minister shall read the names of the officers elect who shall stand before him and in the presence of the congregation.*

Beloved Brethren, that everyone may understand that you are willing to take upon you these offices, you are now required to answer the following questions:

I ask you, both elders and deacons, whether you feel in your hearts that you are lawfully called of God’s Church, and therefore of God himself, to these your respective offices?

Do you believe the books of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and the perfect doctrine of salvation, and do you reject all doctrines contrary thereto?

Do you promise to be loyal to the witness and work of the Reformed Church in America, using your utmost endeavor to further her mission at home and abroad?
Do you promise, according to your ability, faithfully to discharge your respective responsibilities in keeping with the meaning of your offices?

Do you promise to walk in all godliness, and, in case you should become remiss in your duty, to submit yourselves to the admonition of the Church? What is your answer?

*Then each one shall respond:*

**Yes, truly, with all my heart.**

Since no man is sufficient of himself for these things, let us call on God for his grace.

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who called these servants to these holy offices, enlighten them with thy Spirit; strengthen them with thy hand; and so govern them in thy service that they may decently and fruitfully walk therein; to the glory of thy name and the advancement of thy kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Ordination and Installation**

*The minister shall then lay his hand on each kneeling candidate who has not before been ordained to this particular office, and say:*

Take thou, ___________ (using the full name of each person to be ordained), authority to execute the office of elder (deacon); in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Declaration**

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, I now declare you to have been ordained and to be duly installed in your offices of elder and deacon. I now commend you to the grace of God in the discharge of all your duties. The blessing of God Almighty, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest on you and abide with you always. Amen.
Interrogation of the Congregation

The minister shall then ask the members of the congregation to rise.

Do you, the members of this congregation, who have prayerfully chosen these men to their respective offices, receive them as the duly elected and ordained servants of Christ in his Church?

Will you esteem them for the sake of the offices for which they have been chosen and ordained?

And do you promise to walk in the obedience of faith to Jesus Christ as Lord of his Church and to these servants through whom it pleases him to exercise his Lordship? What is your response?

The members of the congregation shall respond:

We do.

The minister may then say:

The Lord bless you and multiply his grace to you, that you may faithfully perform these promises.

Exhortation

After the congregation is seated, the minister shall say:

I exhort you, therefore, elders and deacons, to be faithful in the performance of your duties; to magnify him who has called you to these high and holy offices; and to show yourselves zealous for the Church of Christ, which he has purchased with his own blood.

Beloved in the Lord, I exhort you, receive these men as the servants of God. Esteem them highly in love for their work’s sake. So shall you be with them the servants of the Lord and receive from him the reward of righteousness.

That each of us in his respective calling may obtain grace for the faithful performance of his duties, let us call on the name of the Lord.
Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty and most merciful God, of whose help and guidance we ever stand in need, bestow upon these thy servants such gifts as are necessary for them in their respective ministries. Give grace to them that they may serve thee faithfully all their days and at last enter into the joy of their Lord.

Grant also thy grace to this people over whom they are now placed, to the end that, everyone acquitting himself of his duty, thy holy name may be magnified and the kingdom of thy Son Jesus Christ be enlarged. These things we ask through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

General Prayers

Hymn

Benediction

*In case the service of ordination and installation takes place elsewhere in the Order, it should be concluded with the Prayer. The service should then continue to follow the Order to the end.*
ORDER FOR INSTALLATION OF CHURCH WORKERS

This order is most appropriately used on a Lord’s Day, during the morning worship. After the presentation of the offerings, and before the General Prayers, the minister may offer the following prayer.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Father, who art rich in mercy to all who call on thee, we bless thee that thou art pleased to call us to be fellow laborers with Christ our Lord in his Church and Kingdom. Teach us, O Lord, to serve thee as thou art worthy to be served, to give and not to count the cost, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for any reward other than that of knowing that we do thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Instruction

Beloved in the Lord, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, so each member of his Church is called to the service of his brethren. The Lord gives to each one his own place and task in the Body of Christ, and also gifts by which he is qualified to accomplish the work to which he has been appointed. Scripture declares that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Lord,” and “there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone.” To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

I Corinthians 12: 4, 6

In our church we recognize the place and need for several kinds of leadership and service that call for the sincere and willing dedication of Christian men and women. It is with joy in thanksgiving that we now set apart for service in our congregation him who has been appointed and chosen to the following work:

Here the minister may name the person (or persons) who is to be set apart together with the designation of the particular service as Deaconess, as Director of Christian Education, as Assistant in Christian Education, as Officer and Teacher in the Church School, as Officer of Church Organizations, as Church Visitor, or as __________________.
The Interrogation

Beloved in Christ, before installing you in your particular ministry, I ask you to arise and answer sincerely the following questions in the presence of God and his Church:

Do you acknowledge yourself called of God through his Church to the work and service of ___________? (Here name the appropriate number and kinds of service.)

Do you acknowledge the holy Scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice, and will you in your service further and support the Christian Faith as it is expressed in the Confessions of our Church?

Do you promise to fulfill your ministry, as God may give you grace, with diligence and zeal worthy of the calling to which you have been called?

What is your answer?

Answer: Yes, truly, with all my heart.

The Installation

The almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, fill you with his grace, that you may faithfully perform your duties, and that in so doing you may serve him acceptably and faithfully, to the praise of his holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Declaration and Charge

Beloved fellow servant in Christ, be an example, therefore, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith. Neglect not the gift that is in you. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. Be diligent in prayer, remembering that without Christ you can do nothing.

Address to the Congregation

Beloved congregation, receive this fellow worker as a servant of Jesus Christ. Support him in his Christian service and responsibility in the life of the church. Encourage him by your words and prayers. Consider yourselves
coworkers with him in the service of Christ.

Since no one is sufficient for these things, let us call on God with thanksgiving.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Eternal and ever merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we thank thee that thou hast chosen to thyself a Church which thou dost rule by thy Word and Spirit, and in which thou art pleased to use the service of men. We commend this servant here before thee to thy continual love and guidance. Fill him with thy grace that he may accomplish the work set before him. Grant him patience to bear the difficulties which he may meet in his work. Strengthen him with thy Spirit that he may remain steadfast, knowing that, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that does not fade away. Hear us, O Father, through thy beloved Son. Amen.

General Prayers

The General Prayers should be concluded with the Lord’s Prayer if it has not been previously used in the Order.

Hymn

Benediction

In case the service of installation is used in another place in the Order, it should be concluded with the Prayer. The service of worship should then continue to follow the Order to the end.
COMMISSIONING OF CHRISTIANS TO MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

The commissioning as a response to God is appropriately conducted in the Response section of the worship, before the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession. It could well be shared by pastor and elder or other congregational representatives.

The leader addresses the congregation:

Christian friends, as Jesus called men and women to service, so God called us to participate in the redemption of all creation. Each of us has been given a unique expression of God’s Spirit. We are to develop, refine, and use what has been given to us for the common good.

THE VOWS

The person being commissioned will rise and remain standing. The leader says:

At the celebration of baptism,
We pledge ourselves to nurture one another in the faith.
You, ______ (name and role; e.g., as teachers)
carry a particular joy and responsibility.

The leader continues:

Do you promise, by the grace of God,
to give yourselves to this calling
with diligence, energy, and love
and to be guided by the Spirit and the Word of God?

I do, by the grace of God.

Christians, let us acknowledge the gift(s) and calling(s)
of your sister(s) and brother(s).

The congregation responds in unison:

We receive you as servants of Christ;
we pledge to support you in your service.
We encourage you with works and prayers.
We consider ourselves co-workers with you in the service of Christ.

THE CHARGE

*The leader says:*

Servants of Christ, accept the service with which you have been entrusted. Do not neglect the gift that is in you. Present yourselves to God as approved workers, ever faithful to the Spirit of God. Remember always that Jesus called you friends as well as servants. Attend to prayer, for without God you can do nothing.

Let us pray:

*The congregation prays in unison:*

O God, giver of all good gifts, we commend ourselves and our sisters and brothers to your constant love and guidance. Fill them with grace and grant them the strength and peace of your spirit. In the name of Christ, our master, servant, and friend. Amen.
ORDER FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF A NEW CONGREGATION IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

The organization of a church is described in The Constitution of The Reformed Church in America (Articles 9 and 10) and shall follow the procedures therein stated. A meeting of the Classis shall be duly called and the president or other appointed officer shall preside.

Prior to the meeting, the Classis, acting as elders, shall examine the credentials of those presenting themselves. In the case of those who present certificates of membership in the Church of Jesus Christ, an examination to determine whether the certificates are in proper order is sufficient. In the case of both those baptized in infancy and those desiring baptism, who seek reception into full membership and admission to the Lord’s Table, the Classis shall examine the candidates as to their knowledge of the Christian Faith as contained in the Apostles’ Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer. They may also be examined regarding the sincerity of their decision to seek admission to the full communion of Christ’s Church.

Let both minister and elders remember, however, that only an affirmation of those things most surely believed among us are required by the Church from those who would enter her holy fellowship. Let them also remember that they are not judges, but fathers, whose chief duty it is to encourage and strengthen those who are young in faith.

After the Classis has assembled, with those to be organized, a service may then take place as follows:

Votum and Sentences

Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Lord’s Prayer

Scripture Lesson(s)

Appropriate lessons are Acts 2:34-47 and Matthew 16:16-28

Hymn

Sermon

Prayer for Blessing on the Word
Statement of Purpose

After the sermon and prayer, the presiding minister shall say:

Dearly Beloved, we are assembled together in the name of the Lord Jesus and under the authority of The Reformed Church in America to organize a new congregation. On the ____ day of __________, ____, the Classis of __________ approved the petition of several persons for a congregation in this place. Due notice having been given of the purpose of this meeting, I now call upon you as members of the Classis of __________ to rise and give answer to the following question:

Here the members of the Classis or its appointed committee shall rise.

Do you, the members of the Classis of __________, give your consent to the organization of a congregation in this place?

Answer: We do.

The minister shall then say:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the authority of the Classis of __________, I declare that a congregation of The Reformed Church in America is now to be established in this place. I ask that the names of those who are to be received into the membership of this congregation be presented.

Presentation of Candidates

Here the missionary of the Classis or Synod, or an other appointed person, shall present the candidates for membership and say:

Fathers and Brethren, the following persons have declared their intention to become members of the Church of Jesus Christ which is about to be established in this place:

Those presenting certificates of prior church membership:

Their names shall be read.

Those previously baptized and making confession of their faith in Jesus
Christ, as Lord and Savior:

Their names shall be read.

And those seeking baptism and making confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Their names shall be read.

The Reception

The presiding minister then shall ask those presenting certificates to arise, and say to them:

Dearly Beloved in the Lord, you have already made confession of the Christian Faith, and have been received into the communion of the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, we now welcome you into our fellowship, and pledge to you our confidence and affection in the life and work of this household of faith.

May God enable us all to walk together in harmony and holiness, to help one another by word and example in the faithful performance of our duties toward God and our fellowmen, and to live in all things as it becomes the Gospel of Christ.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Jesus Christ to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The minister shall then ask both those baptized in infancy and those desiring baptism who seek reception into the full membership and admission to the Lord’s Table to arise, and he shall say:

Dearly Beloved, you who now seek Christian Baptism [and you who have been baptized in infancy] have already before the elders made a confession of your faith and of your determination to live the Christian life. Now in this most solemn manner before God and his Church, you are to repeat and renew that confession. Let us all arise and confess our Faith, in the words of 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.

*While the candidate(s) remains standing, the minister shall ask him the following questions:*

Do you acknowledge and confess the Apostolic Faith thus affirmed as your faith, and do you purpose steadfastly to continue to the end of your life in the truth affirmed in these Articles of the Christian Faith, as they are taught in the Church of Christ, according to the Word of God?

Do you acknowledge that you are delivered from all your sins and miseries only by the saving work of Jesus Christ, and will seek to show true gratitude to God for this deliverance?

Do you promise to make faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the use of the Sacraments; to give faithful adherence to the doctrines and teaching of the Church; and to walk in the spirit of Christian fellowship and brotherly love with the congregation, to submit yourself to all Christian admonition; to offer faithfully to the service of God your prayers and your gifts; and to seek the things that make for purity and peace in the Church of Jesus Christ as long as you live?

*Answer:* Yes, truly, with all my heart.

**Administration of the Sacrament and Declaration**

*While the candidate(s) kneels, the minister shall baptize him, saying:*

*N__________, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*While all the candidates kneel, also those who have been baptized in infancy, the*
minister shall lay his hand on each head in turn and make the following declaration:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of his Church, I declare that N_________, received into the visible membership of the Holy Catholic Church through baptism, is now admitted to the Lord’s Table.

The presiding minister shall then ask the members of Classis to arise to respond to the following questions:

Shall the confession of faith of these persons and the tokens of membership here presented be approved?

Answer: Yes.

Do you approve the application of these our fellow Christians to be organized as a congregation under the ________ Classis of The Reformed Church in America?

What is your answer?

We Do.

Declaration

By the authority vested in me by The Constitution of The Reformed Church in America, I do now declare that the persons here present are duly organized as a congregation of Jesus Christ, and are taken under the care of _________ Classis of The Reformed Church in America, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy (I Peter 2:9, 10).

Prayer

Let us pray.
Almighty God, who in thy great mercy dost continually gather unto thyself from among the lost children of men a Church, and dost add to it daily those who are being saved, look with thy most gracious favor on these thy servants who have made the good confession before thee and thy Church. Grant to them the grace of thy good Spirit, that with all fidelity they may observe and keep their vows, walking together in the whole company of the faithful in thy Holy Catholic Church, of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head, and seeking ever to find that more excellent way which he has taught. Being members of his body and therefore members of one another, may they labor together with thee in love, not seeking their own welfare, but each esteeming his brother better than himself; and bearing the burdens of the weak, may they give a good account of themselves before thee and before the world. Keep them from all harm; deliver them from the wiles of the devil; bring them at last to the inheritance of the saints in light; and number them with thine elect of every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, a multitude which no man can number, who cease not to praise thee day or night; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, blessed forever. Amen.

Hymn

Benediction

After this service, a meeting of the new congregation shall be called under the supervision of the Classis; elders and deacons shall be elected, and other business conducted as necessary.
ORDER FOR LAYING THE CORNERSTONE OF A CHURCH BUILDING

*The service may begin with a hymn, votum, appropriate sentences from Scripture, and a salutation, after which the minister may say:*

Dearly Beloved, we are here assembled in the name of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to lay the cornerstone of a house to be devoted to his honor, service, and praise. Within its walls, his holy name is to be worshiped, his holy Gospel proclaimed, and his holy Sacraments celebrated. Knowing that our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, let us lift up our hearts to him in humble supplication for his blessing.

**Prayer**

Let us pray.

O almighty God, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, direct us in this our undertaking with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our work begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Psalter and Gloria Patri**

*An appropriate selection of the Psalter may be read, followed by the Gloria Patri. A suggested selection is number 130 or 131.*

**Scripture Lesson(s)**

*From the Epistles may be read 1 Peter 2:1-10 or 1 Corinthians 3:10-17, and from the Gospels, Matthew 7:24-27. A hymn or anthem may be sung after the Epistle lesson.*

*Then the minister may lead the people in a confession of Faith, saying:*

Let us make confession of our most holy Faith, in the words of the Apostles’ (or Nicene) Creed.
Laying of the Cornerstone

Any such historical or descriptive document as may have been prepared to be deposited in the cornerstone may be read, and while the minister places his hand on the stone, which has been set in its place, or strikes it thrice with a mallet, he may say:

I lay the cornerstone of a house to be devoted to the service of almighty God; in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 3:11

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Psalm 127:1

Prayer

Let us pray.

Blessed be thy name, O Lord, that it has pleased thee to put it into the hearts of thy servants to build a house, in which thy name will be worshiped, the glad tidings of salvation proclaimed, and thy holy Sacraments celebrated. Prosper us, O Lord, in this our undertaking. By thy providence keep and preserve to the end the work which is now begun in thy fear. Bless the industry and skill of the workmen. Shield them from accident and danger. Grant to them, and to all of us here present, the guidance of thy Spirit, so that we may become, in soul and body, living temples of the Holy Spirit, and be prepared for that eternal city which has foundations, whose builder and maker thou art. All this we ask through the abundant merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. And now, as our Savior has taught us to pray, we make bold to say:

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, forever. Amen.

A sermon or address may be given here, after which an offering may be received and dedicated.
Hymn

Benediction
ORDER FOR THE
DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

The first Order of Morning Worship may be followed through the Doxology. For
the responsive reading Psalm 24 or 84 may be used. Appropriate Scripture les-
sons may be read: from the Old Testament one of the following, Exodus 40:17-38,
I Kings 9:1-9, Haggai 1:1-11, or I Kings 8:22, 23, 27-30; from the Epistles either
Hebrews 13:10-21 or Ephesians 2:11-22; and from the Gospels, Matthew 16:13-
20.

Dedication

The minister shall then say:

Dearly Beloved in the Lord, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
has in his grace brought to its consummation our work of preparing a house
for his worship and the honor of his name. Within these walls his Gospel
is to be proclaimed and his Sacraments are to be celebrated. We are now
gathered in his presence for the purpose of devoting this church by a solemn
act of worship to its proper and sacred use and of dedicating it to the honor
of his most holy name. I ask you now to arise, and before the Lord to unite
in this act of dedication.

Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God,

to thee we dedicate this house.

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father who art in heaven,

to thee we dedicate this house.

Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, Head of the Body, which is the
Church; Head over all things to the Church; Prophet, Priest, and King of thy
people,

to thee we dedicate this house.

God the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son; given to be
our abiding Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter; Lord and Giver of Life,

to thee we dedicate this house.
Prayer

After the congregation is seated the minister shall say:

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, Maker of heaven and earth, who dwells not in temples made by hands, we humbly adore thee for thy revelation in Jesus Christ. We bless thee that from of old thy way has been in the sanctuary. We give thanks that thou hast put it into the hearts of thy servants to build this house for thy worship and praise, that it may be a witness to thy presence and that thy glory may be seen in thy sanctuary.

Grant, we pray thee, that when thy people assemble here, thy Holy Spirit may rest on them; that they may worship thee with clean hands and pure hearts; that thy ministers may proclaim the Gospel of thy grace with boldness and strength; and that thy holy Sacraments may be so celebrated that they may be effectual means of grace to thy people.

May the doors of this house be open wide to all sorts and conditions of men. May it truly be a house of prayer, the gateway to heaven, where thou dost speak to thy children and they, hearing, respond in faith and obedience. Grant that the service of thy Word and Sacraments may arouse us to a passionate desire to do thy will, that thy kingdom may come in and through us in our several callings.

Bless also, we pray thee, thy holy catholic Church. Bring us every day continually to a larger experience of the communion of saints. And, finally, we pray thee, bring us and all who love thy appearing to that City wherein there is no temple, of which the Lamb is the light. And unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

General Prayers

The General Prayers should be concluded with the Lord's Prayer if it has not been used previously in this Order.

Hymn
Benediction

*In case the service of dedication is used in another place in the Order, it should be concluded with the Prayer. The service of worship will then continue to follow the Order to the end.*
ORDER FOR THE RECEIVING AND DEDICATION OF MEMORIALS, GIFTS, AND FURNISHINGS

At the appointed time in the regular order of worship, after the Doxology in the first Order, the service may take place at that part of the church where the memorial, gift, or church furnishing is to be received, using for each the prayer designated. The order for each is as follows:

Sentences

The minister may use the following Sentences from Scripture, and the Prayer, before he calls for the presentation of the gift.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.  
Psalm 124:8

Honor and majesty are before him;  
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.  
Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!  
Psalm 96:6, 7

Prayer

Let us pray.

Blessed and glorious Lord God, by whose power, wisdom, and love all things are enlightened and made perfect, be merciful to us and bless us and cause thy face to shine upon us, that what we now do in thy name and for thy Church may please thee, who art blessed forever. Let thy work be manifest to thy servants, and thy glorious power to their children. May thy favor be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Presentation

The minister may then call upon the person who makes the presentation and shall receive it for the church. The presenter may use the following form:
In memory of __________ (or in the name of __________), we present this __________ to God for use in his church and ask that you receive it to the praise and glory of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The minister may respond:

With gratitude to almighty God, we receive this __________ as a sacred trust and call on all who shall use it to treasure it with reverence and godly fear.

And now, in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, we set aside this __________ to the glory of God in the worship of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may use one of the following prayers which ever is appropriate to the occasion, before he leads the people in the general prayers, after which the service closes with a hymn or a benediction.

Prayer

FOR DEDICATING AN ORGAN

O Lord, Maker of all things, whose praise is set forth in all thy works, accept, we pray thee, the offering of this organ which we thy servants here present to thee, and which we devote to thy glory and to the showing forth of thy praise in this house of prayer. Grant that when the musician shall play, thy hand may be upon him and come on the people, that at the sound of the organ they may lift up their voices in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Inspire them to make melody in their hearts to thee and to sing with spirit and with understanding to the end that they may be united with those who stand before thy throne saying, “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever”; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR THE DEDICATION OF PULPIT AND/OR LECTERN

Most merciful God, whose Word is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path, and who art pleased to make us understand thy will by thy holy Word, let thy blessing rest on the __________, which we devote to thy service.
Grant, we pray thee, that the glorious Gospel of thy Son, our Lord, may be made known to thy worshiping people and become effectual unto faith and eternal life. When thy holy Word is read and preached in this place, may we who hear both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and receive grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same, to the end that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith; and we, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled with all thy fullness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR THE DEDICATION OF A COMMUNION TABLE

O God, who by the life and death and rising again of thy dear Son consecrated for us a new and living way into the holiest of all, accept us through him, we pray thee, and hear us as we dedicate this Communion Table to the worship of thy house. As Christ our Lord in his passion gathered his disciples around the table of fellowship, so grant that when we gather to receive his body and blood we may be united in the fellowship of his suffering, and be made like him in love. Help us, we pray thee, through the grace of thy Holy Spirit, always to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with minds and consciences cleansed, to receive the Sacrament of Christ’s body and blood; that we may hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering and stir up one another to love and good works and be made partakers of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR THE DEDICATION OF COMMUNION VESSELS

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of old commanded thy servant Moses to consecrate the vessels of the sanctuary for use in thy worship, receive, at our hands, we pray thee, these vessels which we set apart and separate from all ordinary and common uses to the holy service of thy house in the Sacrament of the body and blood of our Savior. Accept and bless them, we pray, that they may be made holy to thee in the ministration of the means of grace given through him who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven. Grant that we, in receiving thine own gifts of bread and wine in thankful remembrance of his death and passion, may by the power of the Holy Spirit be made true partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to the glory of thy most holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
FOR THE DEDICATION OF A BAPTISMAL FONT

Almighty God and gracious heavenly Father, who of thine infinite mercy and goodness promised to us that thou wilt be not only our God, but also the God and Father of our children, accept, we pray thee, this Baptismal Font, which we devote to thy service for the honor and glory of thy name. Bless and consecrate it that it may be a vessel of thy covenanting grace to us and to our children. Grant that all who are brought here for baptism may be baptized by thy Holy Spirit, and be received into the Church of thy dear Son; that they may be separated from the world and sin and belong wholly to him whose ensign and banner they bear. By thy Word and Spirit guide them through the days of their years to their life’s end, so that they may live worthy of the name that is above every name, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR THE DEDICATION OF OTHER APPOINTMENTS

The following prayer may be fittingly used to dedicate any addition to the appointments of a church which is to be used in services of worship. All other gifts may be recognized but should not be dedicated.

Almighty and gracious heavenly Father, who desirest that thy people worship thee in the beauty of holiness, accept, we pray thee, the gift of our hands and hearts for the beautifying of thy church. Bestow thy blessing on us now as we devote to thy service __________, for the use and adornment of this holy place. May all who worship here be conscious of thy presence and be drawn into the fellowship of thy Spirit and satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

General Prayers

Hymn

Benediction