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. 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.