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. (using full name), 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 exercise 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 Christian name, omit surname) 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.

N_________________________________________________________, (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.”

Be loved 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.”

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.

If the service is also one of installation, omit the following indented material.

PRAYER FOR GRACE

The presiding officer shall say:

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.
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 _________________________
and the ___________________ is fully constituted, and that the Reverend _________________________ 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 BENEDECTION.