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.