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_  
_Zechariah 8:7-8_  
_Exodus 15:2_  
_Psalm 96:1-3_

_Psalm 100_  
_Psalm 43:3-4_  
_John 4:24_  
_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_  
_Jude 2_  
_2 John 3_  
_Titus 1:4_

_2 Peter 1:2_  
_1 Timothy 1:2_  
_Revelation 1:4-5_
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*

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

B  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 forevermore. 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
**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.
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*
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
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:

\[ N \text{ (use Christian name; omit surname)}, \]

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:

\[ N \text{ (use Christian name; omit surname)}, \]

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:

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

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.
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 (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 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 \textit{(using full names)},
to be ordained and installed to the Office of Deacon;
NN/s \textit{_____________________________________________},
to be ordained and installed to the Office of Elder;
NN/s \textit{_____________________________________________},
to be installed as deacon;
and NN/s \textit{_____________________________________________},
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________ have been 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.
ORDER FOR COMMISSIONING CHRISTIANS TO THE MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

This order is appropriate for commissioning Associates in Ministry and others whose ministries entail major occupational commitments within the church, such as Christian educators, youth workers, administrators, musicians, parish nurses, and preaching elders.

After the sermon and the prayer for blessing on the Word, in the Response to God, the presiding minister shall begin:

PRESENTATION

Beloved in the Lord,
we have come to commission a (name of position)
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.

A representative of the consistory comes forward and addresses the congregation and presiding minister:

The consistory, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit,
affirms that NN (using full name)
has been appointed (name of position) here at N_______________________________ Church.

The representative presents the person to be commissioned. The presiding minister addresses the candidate:
Our Lord, who came among us to serve, calls us to faith and a life of gratitude. 

N (Christian name only), you stand among us to render a particular service, a gift from God to equip us in the work of ministry. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Romans 12:4-8

Do you accept this ministry of (name of ministry) in confidence that it comes from God?

Yes, truly, with all my heart.

Will you fulfil this ministry in accordance with the teaching and practice of the Reformed Church in America?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

Will you be diligent in your study of Scripture, faithful in your use of the means of grace, and constant in prayer?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

Will you trust in God’s care, seek to grow in love for those you serve, strive for excellence in your work, uphold the unity, purity, and peace of the church, and adorn the gospel with a godly life?

I will, and I ask God to help me.

The minister addresses the congregation:

Beloved people of God, will you receive this sister/brother as a servant of the Lord?
Will you encourage her/him as she/he accepts this responsibility for our common life? Will you provide such financial and personal support that she/he will serve with joy and not with grief?

We will.

COMMISSIONING

N (Christian name),

[If the candidate is professionally certified the following shall be said:]

You have been certified for this ministry and we commission you for this ministry of (name of position) at N____________________ Church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister continues with one of the prayers, as appropriate:

Let us pray.

Gracious God,
as you call workers to varied tasks
in the world and in your church,
so you have called this your servant
to this ministry.
Grant her/him joy,
that her/his work may stir up
each of us to a life of faithful service.

For a Christian educator or youth director

God of wisdom,
as you call teachers
to educate, comfort, admonish, and care for us,
so you have called this your servant.
Fill her/him with wisdom and patience and love;
keep her/him faithful to your Word,
that she/he may with gladness
teach, comfort, counsel, and guide
your people toward mature discipleship
in Jesus Christ, our Lord.
For a church musician

God of glory,
be present with your servant,
who seeks through your gift of music
to perfect our praises and
to proclaim your presence with power.
Through this music
grant us new awareness of your beauty and grace,
and make us worthy
to join our praises with the hosts of heaven.

For a church administrator

God of creation,
we thank you for the orderliness of your world.
Bless and accept the work of this your servant
in helping the church fulfill its task.
Remind us that we are accountable to you
in all things great and small.

For a preaching elder

God of grace,
be present with your servant
that the word which she/he proclaims
will be in truth your Word
to nurture and build up
the body of Christ.
Keep her/him faithful in study and prayer,
service, and holy living
that your church may live
in joy and peace.

For a medical worker

God of mercy,
as Jesus brought health and strength
to the sick and afflicted,
you have called this your servant
to aid the suffering.
Make her/him wise in using knowledge and skill,
diligent in ministering to those in need,
and compassionate in all *her/his* work. In the midst of suffering and death, make *her/him* a faithful witness to the hope of the resurrection.
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.
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
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!
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 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.

_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 _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 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 _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 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.
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*
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,  
butf 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,  
butf 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
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

Psalm 124:8

Matthew 11:28-29

John 11:25-26
Or

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

Or

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

Job 1:21

Or

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

Or

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18

Or

The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 34:22

Or

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; 
he 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.
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,
nor 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
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
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,
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
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.
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*
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.
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,
for 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.
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.
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.
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 the Family Members

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.
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?

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 \textsc{NN_______________} is ordained to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.

RESPONSE TO ORDINATION

\textsc{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 \textsc{N________________} 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. \textsc{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.

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 congregation. 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, esteem 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.  
\[\text{[text]}\], 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 \(N\) (name)  
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.
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