**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_