**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*