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 \textit{(name of ministry/agency)}
to be its \textit{(name of position)}.

We invite you to come forward, N \textit{(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 \textit{(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?

\textbf{Yes, truly, with all my heart.}

The presiding officer shall invite the congregation to stand:

Let us all stand with N \underline{__________}, 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. 

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 __________________ 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.