

Directory of Worship

THE
DIRECTORY
OF
WORSHIP

FOR

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

MODERN LANGUAGE VERSION

Second Edition 1998

THE DIRECTORY OF WORSHIP FOR THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES: Modern English Version
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Preface to the Second Edition

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this *Reformed Directory of Worship* was published by the Eureka Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States in 1970. This second edition is being published by the Synod of the Reformed Church in the U.S. which was constituted out of the Eureka Classis in 1986. By that time the Eureka Classis had grown from a regional ecclesiastical assembly to embody churches all across the United States.

Although several noteworthy changes from the first edition appear in this second edition of the *Directory*, the purposes for it are much less fundamental and comprehensive than were those for the first edition of 1970. As can be seen from the preface to the first edition which appears below, it was designed to replace earlier directories which were not only no longer available, but which embodied a less than thoroughly Reformed and biblical theology and perspective on worship. The *Directory* of 1970 was then truly a first edition. It was a new Directory based on other Reformed sources.

The need for the first edition found its roots as far back as the middle of the 19th Century when the Reformed Church in the U.S. was wracked by a liturgical controversy brought on by the introduction of sacramentalist and other unreformed ideas into the worship of the Church by professors at its own seminary, Rev. Philip Schaaf and Dr. John Nevin. Since the seminary of the Reformed Church was then located at Mercersburg, PA, the theology created by these professors was called the "Mercersburg Theology," a theology more compatible with Lutheran and Episcopalian teachings on the sacraments than with Reformed doctrine. Although there was great opposition in the Church to the Mercersburg Theology and the *Provisional Directory of Worship* which applied its principles to worship and

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sacraments, the Church eventually produced compromise directories which sought to mediate between Reformed and Mercersberg teachings.

It was to replace these mediating directories still in use that the Eureka Classis decided to produce a truly Reformed directory of worship. The 1970 *Directory* has been in use in our churches for over a quarter of a century. During this span of time certain deficiencies in the *Directory* have been noted, and accordingly, it was decided at the 1992 Synod meeting of the Reformed Church in the U.S. to appoint a committee to "study the *Directory of Worship* to update its language, (and) to update its forms with respect to content." This committee was augmented at the 1993 meeting of Synod and instructed "to study the *Directory of Worship* to recommend changes it deems necessary to make the language understandable in the present culture," (and to use biblical material quoted from the New King James Version in order to eliminate old English verb forms while retaining the flavor of the King James Version). This second edition of the *Directory of Worship* was declared fully adopted by the 1998 meeting of Synod, having been ratified by all of the Classes of the Reformed Church in the U.S. during the previous year. It is being published in a Traditional English Version as well as a Modern English Version.

As with the First Edition, the Reformed Church in the U.S. again acknowledges its indebtedness to other Reformed denominations for liturgical language, forms and style which we have freely incorporated into our *Directory*. In particular, we thank the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Church for their contributions. Our special thanks also to Rev. Robert Grossmann who did the computer typesetting for these directories.

The Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States sends forth this second edition of the

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Directory of Worship with the hope that it will help our congregations to worship our covenant Lord in spirit and in truth, in the beauty of holiness -- the only worship acceptable to the God of the Bible.

Norman Jones
Norman Hoeflinger
Robert Grossmann
David Dawn
Marvin Olivier

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This Reformed *Directory of Worship* represents a completely new work and is not a mere revision of the previous *Directory*. The Reformed Church in the United States in 1964 was convinced of the need of a new Directory and formed a special committee to produce one.

After four years of work by the committee and corrections by the Eureka Classis, the present edition is now the officially approved Directory. We prayerfully hope that these new liturgical forms will be found theologically accurate, spiritually profitable and aesthetically pleasing to the Reformed Church in her worship of God.

The reason the Reformed Church in the United States, Eureka Classis, authorized this new Directory was to comply with the Constitution of the Church which stipulates that the official liturgy of the Reformed Church in the United States is to be used in the administration of the sacraments and rites of the church (Articles 198, 199, 203, 208). Two drawbacks prevented even general compliance with this Constitutional requirement. First, the last official edition of the *Directory of Worship of the Reformed*

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Church in the United States (1926) was out of print and difficult to obtain. Second, the official edition of the Directory was theologically unacceptable, having been corrupted by unreformed views which had crept into the thinking of the church. Thus it was essential that a new Directory of Worship be compiled.

The Committee wishes to emphasize that this work is indeed a compilation rather than an original composition; the latter procedure would have been both unnecessary and presumptuous. Our Reformed Directories of 1887 and 1926 provided the basic model for our work, but excellent sections from the Orthodox Presbyterian Directory of Worship were also incorporated with slight modifications in some instances. These sections are found in: The Nature of Public Worship, The Scriptural Elements of Public Worship, the Sacraments (Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper), Profession of Faith, the Marriage Form, the Burial Service and the Dedication of a Church Building. We hereby express our thanks to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for these productions. To the Rev. Emil Buehrer we are indebted for his translation of the old German Reformed forms for the Ordination and Installation services, which we used extensively, and also for personally seeing this book through the preliminary and final printing.

May the Spirit of Christ be pleased to use this instrument to direct our Reformed Congregations in the public worship of the Triune God, that all parts of our service may be done decently and in order according to his truth. May God be glorified as His people regularly meet before His holy face.

Directory Committee,

Ministers:

Directory of Worship

Norman Jones, Chairman
Emil Buehrer
Robert Grossmann
Norman Hoeflinger
Hessel Stevens

Elders:

Harry Hieb
Lenhart Neifer

PUBLIC WORSHIP

I. THE NATURE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

Since the end of the creation week, God has commanded that one day in seven be set aside as a day of rest and worship (Gen. 2:4). In New Testament times the Lord's Day, which commemorates the resurrection of Christ, has become the weekly day of rest which is to be kept holy in accordance with the Fourth Commandment (Heb. 4:9), and is to be dedicated to God's glory by the gathering of His people in public worship. Such public worship services held each Lord's Day and on other occasions at the call of the Consistory are official church gatherings at which all of God's children are required to be in attendance unless providentially hindered (Heb. 10:25).

Since the Word of God itself restricts God's people only to such practices in worship which His Word specifically sanctions (Deut. 12:30-32; John 4:23-24), the principles of the public worship of God must not be derived from any other source than the Bible, nor may they depart from its teaching.

A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other, but above all else a meeting of the Triune God with His chosen people. God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the divine omnipresence but, much more intimately, as the faithful covenant Savior (see Heb. 12:18-25). The Lord Jesus Christ said: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

The purpose of public worship is the glory of God. Therefore His people should engage in all the elements of worship with their eyes focused on His glory. The goals of public worship are the building of Christ's Church by the edification of the saints and the addition to its membership of those who are being saved — all to the glory of God. Through public worship on the Lord's Day, Christians should learn to serve God all the days of the week in all

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their activities, remembering, whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.

Public worship is rightly said to be *divine* because God is its beginning and its end. It is of Him and through Him and unto Him.

Public worship is Christian when the worshippers recognize that Christ is the only Mediator through Whom they come to God, when they honor Christ as the great Head of the Church Who rules over public worship, and when their worship is an expression of their faith in Christ and of their love for Him.

Public worship must be performed in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Therefore externalism and hypocrisy stand condemned. The forms of public worship have value only when they serve to express the inner reverence of the worshipper and his sincere devotion to the true and living God. Only those whose hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit are capable of such reverence and devotion.

The Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed no fixed forms for public worship but, in the interest of life and power in worship, has given His Church a large measure of liberty in using the elements of worship sanctioned by Scripture. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God's Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is. All things must be done decently and in order, and God's people should serve Him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness. From its beginning to its end, a service of public worship should be characterized by the simplicity which is an evidence of sincerity, and by the beauty and dignity which are manifestations of holiness.

Public worship differs from private worship because in public worship God is served by the saints united as His covenant people, the Body of Christ. For this reason, covenant children as well as adults should be present as far as possible. For the same reason, no favoritism may be shown to any who attend, nor may any member of the church presume to exalt himself above others as though he were more spiritual, but each one must esteem others better than himself.

It is necessary for God's people to come into His presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of His perfect holiness and their own great sinfulness. They are to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise for the great salvation which He has so graciously provided for them through His only begotten Son, and has applied to them by the Holy Spirit.

II. THE SCRIPTURAL ELEMENTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

1. Since a service of public worship is in its essence a meeting of God with his people, the parts of the service are of two kinds: those which are performed on behalf of God, and those which are performed by the congregation. In the former the worshippers are receptive, in the latter they are active. It is reasonable that these two types of elements be made to alternate as far as possible.

2. The public reading of the Holy Scriptures is performed by the minister as God's servant. Through it God speaks most directly to the congregation, even more directly than through the interpretation of Holy Scripture in the sermon. For this reason the minister does well to refrain from interspersing the

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reading of God's Word with human comments, and the congregation should attend to the reading with deepest reverence. Certain portions of Scripture may be read in response by the congregation when appropriate.

3. In the sermon God addresses the congregation by the mouth of His servant. It is a matter of supreme importance that the minister preach only the Word of God, not the wisdom of man, that he declare the whole counsel of God, and that he rightly handle the Word of truth. To fulfil these goals the sermon must be prepared with the utmost care. A text may not be used merely to introduce a sermon but must be painstakingly expounded. In the sermon the minister should explain the Word of God for the instruction of his hearers and then apply it for their exhortation. Care should be taken in preaching that Christian duty not be divorced from Christian truth. The minister fails to perform his task as a God-appointed watchman on Zion's walls if he neglects to warn the congregation of prevalent soul-destroying teachings by enemies of the gospel. The minister shall seek to build up the saints in the most holy faith and as Christ's ambassador should beseech the unconverted to be reconciled to God. Nothing is more necessary than that the gospel of salvation by grace be proclaimed without any adulteration or compromise, so that the unsaved may rely for salvation only on the grace of God, to the exclusion of their own works or character, and so that the saints may ascribe the glory for their salvation only to God. For these reasons, the consistory must make certain that no person may enter the pulpit if there is reasonable doubt concerning his doctrinal soundness or knowledge of Scripture.

4. It is proper for the minister at the beginning of the service to extend a welcome to the congregation in God's name by the use of the apostolic salutation, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." At the conclusion of the service the minister shall pronounce in God's name either the high priestly benediction, "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," or the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." If, however, the minister considers another scriptural benediction more fitting for a particular occasion, he may use it. The salutation and benediction, as pronounced in God's name, are properly used only by an ordained minister and in a gathering of Christ's church.

5. It is entirely fitting that, before the service, each person in the congregation engage in silent prayer. In public prayer the minister is the voice of the congregation. Therefore he should pray in such a way that the whole assembly of God's people may pray with him. Also, the members of the congregation are bound to listen as he prays and should themselves pray in their hearts. For these reasons it is desirable that the minister prepare himself for public prayers by previous meditation. Early in the service he shall offer a brief invocation, humbly pleading for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in worship for the congregation and himself. At some point before the sermon there shall be a comprehensive prayer incorporating adoration of God's perfections, thanksgiving for His mercies, confession of sins, supplication for the pardon of sins through the blood of the atonement and for renewal by the Holy Spirit; and intercession for the poor, the sick, the dying, the mourning, the persecuted, the erring, the rising generation, the aged, the churches of the denomination, Christian missions at home and abroad, Christian education and other Christian activities, the Church universal, the civil rulers, the community, human society in general or other worthy causes. Public prayer must be offered with deep humility and holy reverence, and should be free from vain repetition or display of words.

6. Since it is the purpose of public worship to glorify God, prayer and praise should predominate in congregational singing. Every member of the church ought to participate in this element of worship. Singing should be done not merely with the lips but with the spirit and the understanding. Since the metrical versions of the Psalms are based upon the Word of God, they ought to be used frequently in public worship. Great care must be taken to insure that all the materials of song are in complete accord with the teaching of Holy Scripture. The tunes as well as the words should be dignified and

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elevated. The stately rhythm of the chorales is especially appropriate for public worship. No person shall take a special part in the musical service unless he is a Christian and adorns his profession with a godly walk.

7. The bringing of tithes and offerings into God's house is a solemn act of thanksgiving to almighty God. It is the duty of the minister to cultivate the grace of biblical giving in the members of the church by calling their attention to the scriptural admonition that every one should give as the Lord has prospered him. He should remind them of the assurance of Scripture that God loves a cheerful giver, and of the blessed example of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, though He was rich, became poor in order that poor sinners through His poverty might become rich. The consistory shall take care that the offerings of the congregation are used only for the maintenance of public worship, the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, and other Christian objectives. If a member of the church designates his gift to a particular cause, the consistory shall respect his wish unless it is convinced that the specified cause is unworthy, in which case the gift shall be returned to the donor.

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**III. A SUGGESTED ORDER OF
PUBLIC WORSHIP**

The elements of worship set forth in the Scriptures may be used in the service of public worship in the order suggested here:

Call to Worship
Salutation
Invocation
Psalm or Hymn
Scripture
Prayer
Psalm or Hymn
Sermon
Prayer
Offering
Psalm or Hymn
Benediction
Doxology

These specific elements may also be used in the service of public worship when desired: the reading of the Law, the Apostles' Creed, reading from the Heidelberg Catechism, the Lord's Prayer, the Gloria Patri, and congregational readings from the Holy Scriptures.

¶ The prayers in this Directory are suggested only. Ex temporaneous prayers may be used, if desired. The singing of one or more of the biblical Psalms is recommended for every worship service.

Baptism of Infants
THE SACRAMENTS

¶ Since the sacraments are ordinances of the visible church, they are not to be administered except under the oversight of the government of the church. Moreover, in ordinary circumstances they are properly administered only in a gathering of the congregation for the public worship of God. Baptism signifies solemn admission into the visible church, and the Lord's Supper constitutes the communion of believers with Christ and with each other as members of His Body, the Church. Nevertheless, if a Spiritual Council judges that very unusual circumstances exist in a particular instance, the sacrament may be administered elsewhere; but in any event, the church must be represented in the service.

I. HOLY BAPTISM

A. The Baptism of Infants

¶ Before the administration of the sacrament of baptism, the minister shall give instruction about the institution and nature of this sacrament.

BELOVED CONGREGATION IN THE LORD JESUS: Listen to the words of the institution of the sacrament of Holy Baptism: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."

¶ If the minister desires, he may use questions and answers 69 through 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism or Belgic Confession article 34 instead of the following two paragraphs on the nature of baptism and the baptism of infants.

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sign and seal of the inclusion of the person who is baptized in the covenant of grace. Teaching that we and our children are conceived and born in sin, baptism witnesses and seals to us the remission of sins and the bestowing of all the gifts of salvation through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ, together with our death to sin and our resurrection to newness of life by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ. Since these gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the Triune God, Who is pleased to claim us as His very own, we are baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And since baptized persons are called to assume the obligations of the covenant, baptism summons us to renounce the devil, the world and the flesh, and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.

Although our young children do not yet understand these things, they are nevertheless to be baptized. For the promise of the covenant is made to believers and to their children, as God declared to Abraham, "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and your descendants after you." In the New Testament no less than in the Old, the children of the faithful, born within the church, have interest in the covenant by virtue of their birth, and right to the seal of it and to the outward privileges of the church. This is because the covenant of grace is the same in substance under both Testaments, and the grace of God for the consolation of believers is even more fully manifested in the New Testament. Moreover, our Savior admitted little children into His presence, embraced and blessed them, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of God." So the children of the covenant are by baptism distinguished from the children of unbelievers and solemnly received into the visible church.

¶ Addressing the parents, the minister shall say:

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Beloved in Christ the Lord, you have heard that baptism is an ordinance of God by which He seals His covenant to us and our children. Therefore it must be used for this purpose and not out of custom or superstition. So that it may be apparent that this is your conviction, you are to answer sincerely the following questions:

First: Do you acknowledge that, although our children are conceived and born in sin and therefore subject to condemnation, they are holy in Christ and, as members of His Church, ought to be baptized?

Answer: *I do.*

Second: Do you promise to instruct your child in the principles of our Christian faith as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and as summarized in the *Heidelberg Catechism*; and do you promise to pray with and for your child, to set an example of piety and godliness before him (her) and to endeavor by all the means of God's appointment to bring him (her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Answer: *I do.*

PRAYER:

Almighty and eternal God, You punished the unbelieving and impenitent world by the flood according to Your severe judgment, yet saved believing Noah and his family in your great mercy; and You drowned Pharaoh and all his hosts in the Red Sea but led Your people Israel through the midst of the sea upon dry ground — by which baptism was foreshadowed - we beseech You through Your boundless mercy graciously to look upon this covenant child. Unite him (her) by Your Holy Spirit with Your Son Jesus Christ, so that he (she) may be buried with Him in His death, and rise with Him in newness of life by daily following Him. May he (she) faithfully bear his (her) cross, and cling to Christ in true faith, firm hope and fervent love, so that he (she) might cheerfully depart from this life, and at the last day appear without fear before the judgment seat of Christ, Your Son, Who with You and the Holy Spirit, the only true God, lives and reigns for ever. Amen.

¶ Thereupon the minister shall baptize the child, saying:

N , I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, we thank You that we could present this child for Holy Baptism. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ accept him (her) as Your own, implanted into Christ's death and resurrection. Make him (her) to increase in wisdom and grace with God and men, and lead him (her), O Jesus, as a lamb of Your fold. We commit him (her) to Your gracious protection and guidance. Grant him (her) Your Holy Spirit, to know You, to love You, to follow You, and to inherit eternal blessedness with You. Amen.

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¶ This prayer may be followed with the Lord's Prayer.

BENEDICTION:

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.
Amen.

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B. The Baptism of Adults

¶ Before the administration of the sacrament of baptism, the minister shall give instruction about the institution and nature of the sacrament.

BELOVED CONGREGATION IN THE LORD JESUS: Listen to the words of the institution of the sacrament of Holy Baptism: “Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Amen.

¶ If the minister desires, he may use questions and answers 69 through 73 of the Heidelberg Catechism or Belgic Confession article 34 instead of the following paragraph on the nature of baptism.

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sign and seal of the inclusion of the person who is baptized in the covenant of grace. Teaching that we and our children are conceived and born in sin, it witnesses and seals to us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ, together with our death to sin and our resurrection to newness of life by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ. Since these gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the Triune God, Who is pleased to claim us as His very own, we are baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And since baptized persons are called upon to assume the obligations of the covenant, baptism summons us to renounce the devil, the world and the flesh, and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to His commandments. Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His Church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of adults must await their own profession of faith in Christ. Having come to years of discretion, they become heirs of salvation and members of the visible church only by way of personal belief in and submission to Christ as Lord and Savior.

¶ Then the minister shall address the person to be baptized:

N , BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: We thank God for the grace which was given you, and by which you have become a partaker of the covenant of grace.

You are now requested to answer sincerely the following questions:

First: Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inerrant and infallible Word of God, and its doctrine, summarized in the confessions of this Church, to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

Answer: *I do.*

Second: Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

The Lord's Supper

Answer: *I do.*

Third: Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord; and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

Answer: *I do.*

Fourth: Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to obey its discipline?

Answer: *I do.*

PRAYER:

Almighty and eternal God, You punished the unbelieving and impenitent world by the flood according to your severe judgment, yet saved believing Noah and his family in your great mercy; and You drowned Pharaoh and all his hosts in the Red Sea but led Your people Israel through the midst of the sea upon dry ground — by which baptism was foreshadowed — we beseech You through Your boundless mercy, graciously to look upon Your servant, united by Your Holy Spirit with Your Son Jesus Christ, buried with Him in His death and risen with Him in His resurrection to newness of life. Grant that he (she), daily following Him, may joyfully bear his (her) cross, and cling to Him in true faith, firm hope and fervent love. Grant, further, that he (she) may cheerfully depart this life, and at the last day appear without fear before the judgment seat of Christ Your Son, Who with You and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns for ever. Amen.

¶ **Then the minister shall administer baptism, saying:**

N _____, I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER:

We thank you from our hearts, dear heavenly Father, that you have given this brother (sister) the grace to know his (her) sinfulness, to give himself (herself) in true repentance and faith to Jesus Christ as his (her) only Savior, to confess Him before men, and to receive in Holy Baptism the seal of the forgiveness of his (her) sins and his (her) acceptance as your child. Help him (her) now, O Lord, that being buried and risen with Christ, he (she) may walk in newness of life from this day forward, and may finally inherit your eternal kingdom with all the elect through our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom with You and the Holy Spirit, be praise and dominion for ever. Amen.

¶ **The minister shall conclude this part of the service by saying:**

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to full communion with God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament

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of the Lord's Supper. I charge you that by the faithful use of the means of grace, the Word of God, the sacraments and prayer, and in humble reliance upon the grace of God, you continue steadfastly in the confession which you have made. Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, He will confess you before His Father in heaven. May the God of all grace, Who called you into His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish and strengthen you. To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

II. THE LORD'S SUPPER

¶ A preparatory service is considered appropriate prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and is to be held at the discretion of each church.

¶ After the sermon, the bread and the wine having been uncovered, the minister shall address the congregation, giving instruction about the institution and nature of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS: Listen to the words of the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

¶ If the minister desires, he may use questions and answers 75 through 82 of the Heidelberg Catechism or Belgic Confession article 35 instead of the following paragraph on the nature of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Until His coming again it is to be observed as a continuing remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death. The physical elements of bread and wine, representing the broken body and the shed blood of the Savior, are received by true believers as signs and seals of all the benefits of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. They signify and seal the remission of sins and nourishment and growth in Christ, and are a bond and pledge of the communion of believers with Him and with each other as members of His spiritual body, the Church. As signs and seals of the covenant of grace they not only declare that God is faithful and true to fulfill the promise of the covenant, but they also summon us to all the duties of the children of God, and call us to renewed consecration in gratitude for His salvation.

In order that we may celebrate the Lord's Supper to our comfort, it is first necessary that we properly examine ourselves. A true examination of ourselves consists in these three parts: First, let everyone consider by himself his sins and accursedness apart from Jesus Christ, so that he may be displeased with himself and humble himself in the presence of God. Second, let everyone examine his heart as to whether he truly believes this certain promise of God that all his sins are forgiven only for the sake of Jesus Christ. Third, let everyone search his conscience whether he is determined to show his gratitude to God the Lord all the days of his life by walking uprightly before Him.

It is my solemn duty to warn the uninstructed, the profane, the scandalous, and those who secretly and unrepentantly live in any sin, not to approach the holy table, where they would partake unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, and so eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Nevertheless, this warning is not designed to keep the humble and contrite from the table of the Lord, as if the supper were for those who might be free from sin. On the contrary, we who are invited to the supper, come as guilty and polluted sinners who are without hope of eternal life apart from the grace of God in Christ. We confess our dependence for pardon and cleansing upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ; we base our hope of eternal life upon His perfect obedience and righteousness; and we humbly resolve to deny ourselves, crucify our old nature, and follow Christ as becomes those who bear

Ordination of Ministers

His name.

PRAYER:

Merciful God and Father, we beseech You that in this supper, in which we cherish the blessed memory of the bitter death of Your dear Son Jesus Christ, You will so work in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that with true confidence we might give ourselves up more and more to Your Son Jesus Christ, in order that our burdened and contrite hearts, through the power of the Holy Spirit, may be nourished and refreshed with His true body and blood, yes, with Christ Himself, Who is true God and man, the only heavenly bread. We pray that we may no longer live in our sins, but that Christ may live in us, and we in Him, so that we may truly be partakers of the new and everlasting testament, the covenant of grace. We do not doubt that You will forever be our gracious Father, never again imputing our sins to us, but providing us with all things necessary for body and soul, as Your dear children and heirs.

Grant us also Your grace, so that we may take up our cross cheerfully, deny ourselves, confess our Savior, and in all our tribulation, with an uplifted head, expect our Lord Jesus Christ to come from heaven, where He will recreate our mortal bodies in the likeness of His glorified body, and take us to Himself in eternity.

Be pleased also, O Lord, to bless these elements of bread and wine, so that receiving them in remembrance of the passion and death of Your dear Son, we may by faith be made partakers of His crucified body and shed blood with all His benefits to our spiritual nourishment and to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

¶ Then the minister, breaking the bread and pouring the wine, shall repeat the words of institution:

“The Lord Jesus, on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it,

¶ (here the minister shall break the bread),

and said, 'Take eat; this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'

In the same manner also He took the cup after supper,

¶ (here the minister shall pour out the wine and take the cup),

saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'”

¶ In distributing the bread the minister shall say:

“The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

¶ In giving the cup he shall say:

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?”

¶ After the people assembled at the table have communed, the minister shall dismiss them with the following or another suitable blessing:

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The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all; depart in peace. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER ALL HAVE COMMUNED:

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 iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities His children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. He Who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Therefore our hearts and lives shall show forth Your praises, O Lord, from now on and for evermore. Amen.

¶ Alternate prayer:

O merciful God and Father, we thank You with our whole heart that in Your boundless mercy You have given us Your only begotten Son to be a mediator and sacrifice for our sins - and our food and drink unto eternal life. We thank You for giving us a true faith, by which we become partakers of these benefits. Through Your dear Son Jesus Christ, You have also instituted and ordained this Holy Supper for the strengthening of our faith. We beseech You, O faithful God and Father, that by the operation of the Holy Spirit the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ and the proclamation of His death may increase our faith and strengthen our fellowship with Christ; Who taught us to pray, saying: *(followed by the Lord's Prayer)*.

¶ A suitable hymn of thanksgiving may be sung if desired.

¶ The minister shall pronounce the following or similar benediction:

Now the God of peace Who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE RITES

I. Ordination and Installation

Ordination of Elders and Deacons

A. Ordination of Ministers of the Word

¶ **After the sermon the presiding minister shall begin in this way:**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DEARLY BELOVED IN CHRIST JESUS: We are gathered here to ordain this brother to the office of Minister of the Word of God according to apostolic order by prayer and the laying on of hands. But since we can do nothing without the Lord, let us unite in prayer for His blessing.

PRAYER:

Almighty and eternal God, by Your Word and Spirit You are gathering a Church chosen out of the whole human race for eternal life according to Your gracious good pleasure, and through Your dear Son You have commanded us to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will send out laborers into His harvest. We therefore beseech You to grant us and all Your servants a rich measure of Your Holy Spirit so that we may understand and proclaim Your Word, and worthily administer the holy sacraments. We ask that our office may also serve to comfort Your people and edify them in true faith. Be with us also in this hour to bless Your servant whom we shall now ordain to the office of Minister of the Word of God. Let him be a man after Your own heart, and may many be led into Your kingdom through his ministry. Amen.

¶ **The presiding minister shall then address the candi date for ordination:**

BELOVED BROTHER IN THE LORD: You stand here in the presence of God to be publicly and solemnly ordained to the office of the holy ministry. Therefore it is proper for you to consider earnestly the dignity and responsibility of this office in order that you may enter into it with a lively consciousness of your own sins and inadequacies, and an ardent desire for divine help. The Lord Himself ordained this office when He said: “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

The apostle Paul also testifies: “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.” “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore You on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

The Lord, Who has promised to be with us even to the end of the world, has maintained the office of Minister of the Word among us to the present time; and since we are about to ordain you to this office, listen further to the apostle Paul to Timothy: “Be an example to the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity... Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them; that your progress may be

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evident to all. Take heed to yourself, and to the doctrine. Continue in them: for in doing this you will save both yourself, and those who hear you.”

The apostle Peter admonishes us similarly: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly; not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

Dear brother, you are therefore as a servant of Christ to feed the flock of God; to preach the Word in season and out of season; to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort with all patience and humility; to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, to strengthen the weak, to seek the lost; to instruct the youth, to continue in prayer and supplication, to administer the holy sacraments, and to maintain good discipline and order in the Church of God.

Be watchful in all things; be a good soldier of Jesus Christ; do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of your ministry; fight the good fight of faith: then the God of peace will be with you; and the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give you a crown of righteousness at that day.

And now in the name of God we request you to answer the following questions:

First: Do you believe that the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, are the Word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore are infallible and inerrant, and are the only and perfect rule of our Christian faith and life?

Answer: *I do.*

Second: Do you honestly and in good conscience before the Lord declare that you believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine in the confessions of this Church, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort, are in complete and accurate agreement with the Word of God; and do you promise to teach and defend the same in good faith and reject all doctrines conflicting therewith?

Answer: *I do.*

Third: Do you believe with your whole heart that you are called by God to this office, and do you rely in the performing of its duties upon the grace and help of the Holy Spirit?

Answer: *I do; this is my belief.*

Fourth: Do you promise to be faithful in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn your profession of the gospel by a life of exemplary piety wherever you may be?

Answer: *I do.*

Fifth: Do you acknowledge the rightful authority of the Reformed Church in the United States, and do you promise to perform your office faithfully in it and to show all proper regard for its laws and ordinances, and render all suitable obedience to its government in the Lord?

Answer: *I do acknowledge and promise it; may the Lord help me.*

Ordination of Elders and Deacons

PRAYER:

You, O Lord, have heard the confession and the oath of Your servant who looking to You, will accept the office of Minister of the Word of God. Consecrate him through the Holy Spirit to Your service and grant him grace and strength so that he may rightly divide the Word, may be an example in all things and may lead many souls into Your kingdom through Jesus Christ. Amen.

¶ Here the candidate shall be directed to kneel, the ministers and elders shall each lay their hands on his head, and the presiding minister shall say:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and in reliance upon His help, we now ordain you to the holy ministry: to proclaim the gospel, to administer the sacraments, to maintain Christian discipline and order in the church, and to be an instrument of the Lord in saving immortal souls. May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be and abide with you now and for ever. Amen.

¶ He shall rise, and the presiding minister shall say:

We offer you the right hand of fellowship to partake with us in this ministry.

¶ Each minister and elder present shall also offer the right hand of fellowship.

¶ When the new minister is to be installed at the same time as pastor of the congregation (or charge) in which he has been ordained, the Installation Service shall now proceed according to the form provided for that purpose. If there is no Installation Service, the presiding minister shall pray as follows:

PRAYER:

Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for the love You have manifested to Your people. Lord Jesus Christ, Prophet, High Priest and King, we thank You that You have purchased Your Church with Your own blood and have established it on Yourself, the Eternal Rock, so that the gates of hell will never prevail against it. We thank You that You have sustained this brother until now and have called him to be a shepherd and teacher in Your Church. Anoint him with Your Holy Spirit we pray, and make him to be a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. O Holy Spirit, the Comforter Who leads into the truth, enlighten and lead him in all his ways so that his ministry may abound to the honor of God and the edification of the church. Sanctify his heart and mind in order that he may walk worthily in the gospel. And when his course is ended here below and his work finished, then let him enter into the joy of his Lord where the wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Now unto You, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever. Amen.

¶ The service shall be concluded with this benediction:

Now the God of peace Who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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¶ The congregation shall sing the Doxology.

B. Installation of Ministers

¶ Immediately after the ordination of a new minister, if this is to take place on the same occasion, or in any other case after the sermon, the presiding minister shall address the congregation as follows:

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS: You have called N _____, now present, to become your pastor. He has accepted your call. After full inquiry and deliberation, the N _____ Classis, under whose supervision and care you stand, has resolved that the proposed pastoral relationship shall be established. We are here now by the appointment and order of Classis to install him in the name of the Lord as the pastor of this charge.

¶ Here the pastor-elect shall present himself, and the presiding minister shall address him as follows:

DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER IN THE LORD: Since the pastoral office you have accepted was solemnly and divinely instituted by the Lord and Head of the Church, it is your solemn and important duty to exercise it faithfully in dependence on the Lord so that you may joyfully give an account of your stewardship. The tasks and duties imposed upon you in this office are clearly evident in the meaning of the names applied to those who minister in the Word and doctrine, such as: shepherd, bishop, teacher, steward. The Lord Himself says: “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; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and, lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

The apostle Paul, deeply conscious of the importance and sacredness of this high calling, addressed those who are occupied with this work in this way: “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.” Hold fast the faithful word as you have been taught, that you may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” “Be an example to the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity . . . Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them; that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself, and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

In agreement with this divine instruction, it is now your duty, dear brother, to give yourself entirely to the ministry of the Word and prayer, and to the administration of the sacraments. You are to instruct the youth and to lead the church over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you. You are called to shepherd this flock, and in conjunction with the elders and deacons to preserve discipline, order and peace in it for the comfort of the saints and the edification of the church. And now, if you will perform this holy task in the mind of Christ, the blessing of the Lord will rest upon you and this flock, and you will dwell together in peace and harmony.

Ordination of Elders and Deacons

¶ Directing all the members of the congregation in which the minister is being installed to rise, he shall say:

BELOVED IN THE LORD, officers and members of this congregation (these congregations): you have just heard what important duties have been assigned to the one you have called as your pastor and teacher. Now listen to what the Word of God says to you, how you are to receive him and what your attitude toward him should be. “We urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the Word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those that must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” “If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?”

From these divine instructions you see that you are to love, honor and obey in the Lord this servant of Christ. You are to submit to his doctrine, admonitions and corrections, and for his service in spiritual things you owe him his material necessities, so that he may devote himself entirely to the ministry of the Word without any cares about his support. Therefore receive him in the Lord, and assist him with counsel and prayer so that the church might be edified and the kingdom of Christ extended by your mutual labor.

¶ The presiding minister shall address this question to the pastor-elect:

And now, dear brother, I ask you in the presence of God and this congregation (these congregations), do you accept the oversight and care of this charge, will you faithfully and conscientiously perform the duties which rest upon you as pastor and teacher, and will you foster this fold in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ in accordance with your ordination vows?

Answer: *I promise to do this by the grace and help of God.*

¶ Then the presiding minister shall address this question to the congregation:

BELOVED IN THE LORD: You have heard this solemn vow. I ask you as officers and members of this congregation (these congregations) in the presence of God: Do you receive this minister as your pastor and teacher, and do you promise to love and honor him, and to be obedient to him in the Lord?

Answer: *We do.*

¶ Now the presiding minister shall install the pastor-elect with these words:

On the basis of these mutual promises, and by the authority of the Honorable N—— Classis, we install you, N——, as pastor and teacher of this congregation (these congregations), and we now assign this charge to your care and oversight in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¶ The presiding minister shall call all of the ministers and elders present to come forward and extend the right hand of fellowship to the newly installed pastor.

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PRAYER:

Gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank You that You have established Your Church here on earth and that You have preserved it until the present time. We are thankful that You have blessed us with all spiritual gifts and heavenly benefits, and have established the office which proclaims reconciliation and Your infinite mercy. Be pleased to fill Your servant, whom You have placed over this flock, with the gifts of Your grace and Spirit so that he may fulfill his calling for the edification of Your saints and the conversion of sinners. O Lord, bless the members of this congregation with Your heavenly gifts in Christ Jesus. Grant that they may be diligent hearers and doers of Your Word, and make them fruitful in all good works to the glory of Your name. Bless the covenant now established between this shepherd and flock, and finally bring them and all of us into the fellowship of the redeemed in the kingdom of Your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ The newly installed pastor shall pronounce the following or similar benediction:

Now the God of peace Who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

¶ The service shall be concluded with the singing of the Doxology.

C. Ordination and Installation of Elders and

Deacons

¶ Those parts of the following form are to be used which fit the particular circumstances in each congregation concerning the number to be ordained or installed, or both.

¶ After the sermon the minister shall say:

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD: This (These) person(s) has (have) been solemnly chosen and called by you, as a Christian congregation, to take part as elder(s) and deacon(s) in the care and service of the church. He (They) has (have) accepted your call. No one has come forward to urge any just objection to his (their) being placed in office. I therefore proceed, in the name of the Lord, to ordain him (those) who has (have) not been ordained previously, and to set each apart to his own office, to the work of the ministry among you.

PRAYER:

O God, You have appointed various offices in your Church by Your Holy Spirit; we pray that You will set apart this (these) Your servant(s) to the work to which You have called him (them) by the voice of Your people. We ask that You will bestow Your heavenly grace on him (them) in order that he (they) may be a good man (good men), full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, and may faithfully serve You in all things. O heavenly Father, grant this we pray, for the sake of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Confirmation

¶ Then addressing the candidates, he shall say:

BELOVED BROTHER(S): Just as it is a great honor to bear office in the Lord's house, so it is also a solemn trust, which no one should take upon himself rashly or lightly. For although your election has been by the free choice of your fellow members, the office(s) to which you have been called is (are) not of human origin or authority, but was (were) instituted by Christ Himself, Who has preserved it (them) in the Church to the present time. You are, therefore, to regard yourself (yourselves) not as the mere servant(s) of men, but as the servant(s) of Christ, appointed in His name and by His authority to the work entrusted to your care. From this you may see how much is entailed in your present induction into office, and how necessary it is that you should magnify your office, and give a high account of its duties as a service to be rendered to God, and not simply to men.

ELDERS are appointed to assist and support the minister of the Word in the general government of the church. In each congregation, they form, with the minister, a council in common for the spiritual supervision of the flock which is committed to their care. Accordingly, they are bound to take part in the work of the ministry, so far as it has to do with pastoral oversight and care. They are to be advisors and counsellors to the minister in the discharge of his holy office; they are to assist him as hands and eyes, acting with him and for him throughout the congregation. It is their duty to live before the flock in the way of Christian example, to watch over it in the Lord, to take an active interest in its spiritual welfare, to share the responsibility for its condition, and to be present in all circumstances with spiritual aid for its necessities and needs. By virtue of their office, it is their duty to visit the sick and afflicted, to instruct the ignorant, to admonish those who are straying, to warn the unruly, and to command and rebuke with authority in Christ's name. Furthermore, the whole discipline of the church belongs to them in conjunction with the pastor, as does its power of the keys, which is exercised both in the form of censure and in the form of restoration.

DEACONS are appointed to assist and support the pastor and elders in those services which apply to the material needs of the general household of faith. They have the honorable charge of caring for the poor and needy, and of making certain that the charities of the church are properly dispensed. They are to aid in securing funds necessary for the support of the church in its various activities. They are to labor among the people in making known to them the needs of the church, fostering the principle of stewardship, and in this way cultivating the spirit of liberal and cheerful giving. In discharging these duties, however, they must not lose sight of the true spiritual character of their office. For although the office of deacon may often be occupied with outward and temporal things, it nevertheless always remains a proper branch of the Christian ministry, and its purpose in all things can only be the eternal salvation of men in the world to come. It is for this reason, that in the New Testament so much stress is laid on the character and life of those who are called to participate in this work. They must be men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, who may be able, both by word and example, to help advance the great purpose of the gospel, making their services to the material necessities of the poor the occasion and means of a still better benefit to their souls. The apostle Paul, writing on this subject in his first epistle to Timothy, expressly requires of deacons the same virtues which are qualifications for the office of elder.

¶ The minister shall now address these questions to the candidates:

And now, brother(s), having carefully considered the nature and design of the office(s) to which you have been called by the voice of this congregation, please answer the following questions:

First: Do you accept the call as coming to you from God, and are you willing to undertake the work and service it sets before you, in the name and for

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the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Answer: *Yes.*

Second: Do you believe that the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, are the Word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore are infallible and inerrant, and are the only and perfect rule of our Christian faith and life?

Answer: *Yes.*

Third: Do you honestly and in good conscience before the Lord declare that you believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine in the confessions of this Church, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt, are in complete and accurate agreement with the Word of God; and do you promise to teach (deacons: "promote") and defend the same in good faith and reject all doctrines conflicting therewith?

Answer: *Yes.*

Fourth: Do you promise to be faithful in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and church officer, endeavoring to adorn your profession of the gospel by a life of exemplary piety wherever you may be?

Answer: *Yes.*

Fifth: Do you promise to exercise your ministry, as elder(s) and deacon(s), among this people, with faithful diligence, according to what you have now declared to be the rule and measure of your faith, showing all proper regard for the lawful authority of the church, and taking heed to your own lives, so that you may adorn the gospel of God our Savior by word and practice answerable to the place you occupy in Christ's house?

Answer: *Yes.*

¶ **Then the presiding minister shall address this question to the congregation:**

BELOVED IN THE LORD: You have heard this (these) solemn vow(s). I ask you as the members of this congregation in the presence of God: Do you receive this (these) elder(s) and deacon(s) as your officers and do you promise to love and honor him (them), and to be obedient unto him (them) in the Lord?

Answer: *We do.*

¶ **Here those who have not previously been ordained to the office in which they are now called to serve shall be ordained. They may be directed to kneel, and the minister and elders shall lay their right hands upon each one in succession. The minister shall say:**

Confirmation

Take authority to execute the office of Elder (Deacon) in the church of God, which office I now solemnly commit unto you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¶ **After the candidates have risen the minister shall install both those now ordained and those previously ordained, using the following form:**

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority belonging to me in His Church, I now install you in the charge and service to which you have been called by this congregation; and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest upon you, abide with you, and strengthen you in your ministry always with all might through the Spirit unto every good word and work. Amen.

¶ **The other consistory members may now be called upon to give the right hand of fellowship to the newly installed officers.**

PRAYER:

O Lord, our heavenly Father, You have been pleased of Your great goodness to call these Your servants to office and authority in Your church; send down upon them, we pray, Your Holy Spirit, by Whose power alone they can be made to fulfill the ministry now committed to them. Make them wise and faithful, humble, tender, modest, and yet bold, constant, patient, and persevering in their appointed work. May Your precepts be manifest in all their words and works, may they hold the testimony of a good conscience, and may they prove themselves good examples to all Your flock; to the glory of Your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ **The service may then be concluded with this benediction and the singing of the Doxology.**

Now the God of peace Who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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II. Confirmation

¶ After the sermon the catechumens shall present themselves before the minister who shall begin in this way:

BELOVED OF THE LORD: the following persons, (Names), have been instructed in our most holy faith, and have sustained a satisfactory examination before the elders of the congregation(s). They are now to be received publicly into communicant membership of this congregation (their respective congregations) through confirmation.

The rite of confirmation is the solemn and joyful acknowledgement by the congregation that God has confirmed His covenant promise of salvation, which was signified and sealed to these children in baptism, by granting them repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ upon their coming to the age of understanding and commitment.

As children of the covenant, they were presented in their infancy by their parents for Holy Baptism, receiving in it the sign and seal of the sonship of God. As joint heirs of the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, they have enjoyed the blessings of the means of grace and special instruction in the doctrines and duties of our faith. They now earnestly desire to confess their faith publicly, to enter into full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and His church by partaking of the Holy Supper, to assume the obligations of communicant membership in the church of Jesus Christ, and to persevere in the fellowship of His people. Therefore they now stand before God and this congregation in this solemn manner to be received publicly by the church and to be admitted to all her blessings.

¶ Here the minister shall address the catechumens:

BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS: We thank God for the grace which has been given to you, in that, having come to years of understanding, you have embraced God's covenant promise which was signified and sealed to you in your infancy by Holy Baptism. (Your knowledge of God's grace and promise has been strengthened by the godly example and instruction of your parents and teachers.) You are now to confess publicly your hearty trust in Christ your Savior, which trust the Holy Ghost has worked in you by the gospel, that not only to others, but to you also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, for the sake of Christ's merits.

You are now requested to answer sincerely the following questions:

First: Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inerrant and infallible Word of God, and its doctrine, summarized in the confessions of this Church, to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

Answer: *I do.*

Second: Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

Answer: *I do.*

Confirmation

Third: Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord; and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with your whole heart, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

Answer: *I do.*

Fourth: Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church, and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to obey its discipline?

Answer: *I do.*

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to full communion with God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the Holy Supper. I charge you that by the faithful use of the means of grace — the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer — and in humble reliance upon the grace of God, you continue steadfastly in the confession you have made. Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, He will confess you before His Father Who is in heaven. May the God of all grace, Who called you to His eternal glory by Christ, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

¶ Now the minister shall extend a hand of greeting, and may present a certificate of reception to each new communicant.

PRAYER:

Most merciful Father, we heartily thank You for the great goodness You have been pleased to show toward these Your servants by giving them grace to embrace and accept for themselves Your covenant of salvation which was signified and sealed to them earlier in the sacrament of baptism. And now, O Lord, we beseech You to complete the good work which You have begun in them. Fortify them against the assaults of sin and hell. Do not let Satan prevail against them. Keep them from the evil that is in the world. Help them to walk in the Spirit, so that they may not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Defend them from all heresy and schism, and from all apostasy and unbelief. Never allow them to draw back to perdition. Make them faithful even to death, so that no one may rob them of their crown. And grant, O most merciful Father, that, having continued steadfast in faith and hope to the end, they may be counted worthy to be united with Your saints in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ The confirmed catechumens shall be dismissed now with this or another suitable benediction:

Now the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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III. Public Profession of Faith

¶ After an appropriate announcement of the names of those who are to be publicly welcomed into the congregation by profession of faith, the minister shall proceed by saying:

BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: We thank our God for His grace which has been given to you in Christ Jesus, by which He awakened in you a desire to profess your faith publicly, here in the presence of God and His holy church, and to obtain the privileges of full communion with the people of God.

You are now requested to answer sincerely the following questions:

First: Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inerrant and infallible Word of God, and its doctrine, summarized in the confessions of this Church, to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

Answer: *I do.*

Second: Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

Answer: *I do.*

Third: Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord; and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with your whole heart, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

Answer: *I do.*

Fourth: Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church, and in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to obey its discipline?

Answer: *I do.*

I charge you then, beloved, that by the diligent use of the means of grace and with the assistance of your God, you continue in the profession which you have just made. In the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, I now welcome you to full communion with the people of God. Rest assured that the privileges of such communion are now yours.

PRAYER:

Confirmation

Almighty and most merciful God and Father, we thank and praise You that You have forgiven all our sins through the blood of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and have adopted us to be Your children through the work of the Holy Spirit. We beseech You for the sake of Christ, always to govern this brother (sister) by Your Word and Spirit so that he (she) may lead a Christian and godly life, and may grow and increase in grace. May he (she) learn to acknowledge the fatherly goodness and mercy which You have shown to him (her) and to us all. Grant that he (she) may live in all righteousness in submission to our only Teacher, High Priest and King, Jesus Christ, and may courageously fight against and overcome sin and the devil, to the end that he (she) may eternally praise and magnify You, Your Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, the one only true God. Amen.

¶ The minister shall close with this or another suitable benediction:

Now the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

IV. Discipline

A. *Excommunication*

¶ Before the minister announces the excommunication, he shall inform the congregation of what the Spiritual Council did in this present case, and why it is considered necessary to exclude the guilty person from the communion of the church, that all might know the justice of the sentence.

BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head and King of the Church, commanded that if a brother trespass against us, we are to go and tell him his fault between us and him alone. If he will not listen to us, we are to take with us one or two others, in order to establish every word in the mouth of two or three witnesses. And if he still refuses to listen to us, we are to tell it to the church. Then if he refuses to listen to the church, we are to think of him as a pagan and a tax collector. In the same manner the apostle Paul commands in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that we should withdraw ourselves from every brother who walks disorderly, and not according to the tradition which he received from us. If anyone who is called a brother, is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, we should report him and have nothing to do with him, so that he might be ashamed.

(We have previously made known to you that) N , a member of this church, has been leading an immoral and ungodly life (or, has been holding and teaching false doctrine — or, has been holding and teaching false doctrine, and leading an immoral and ungodly life), and has by his sin given great offense against the church of Christ. According to the command of our Lord, we have kindly told him his fault, both alone and in the presence of one or two witnesses; we have warned him of the consequences of his heinous offenses against God and the church, and admonished him to repent. But it is with deep sorrow of heart that we announce to you that thus far we have received no proof of true repentance and reformation of life. On the contrary, he has hardened his heart and continues in stubbornness and disobedience.

Wherefore, in order that this erring member of the church may not endanger the whole body, and that the name of God be not blasphemed among us through him, we are now in duty bound, by the command of our Lord, to proceed to the use of the last remedy, and cut him off from the membership of the Church.

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We, therefore, the minister and elders of this church, assembled in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, do hereby announce to you that N , because he will not forsake his sin, is excommunicated from the Church of God; he is separated and cut off from the communion of the saints, and from the use of the sacraments, so long as he continues without repentance.

Moreover, we admonish you, dearly beloved, that you hold no Christian fellowship with this person, so that he may be led to a deep sense of his fall and separation from the Church of Christ. We beseech you, however, not to treat him as an enemy; but to admonish him and pray for him, so that he may be brought to repentance, and restored to the communion of the Church. Remember also that you yourselves are surrounded by temptations; and let the fall of this man be an example to you, and a warning of your danger.

You have seen how he began to depart from the ways of truth and righteousness, and by degrees fell away more and more into error and sin. Observe, therefore, how cunning the great adversary of souls is in leading men to destruction. The devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Be sober, and watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Let everyone be truly sorrowful for his sins, so that God may not humble us again by the fall of any other member of this church. Beloved brethren, let your fellowship be with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; and be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

PRAYER:

O righteous God, most merciful Father, we lament our sins before Your most high majesty, and confess that we have deserved the sorrow and pain which we feel at the separation of a member from Your Church. For Christ's sake, be gracious to us and forgive our iniquities, for which we mourn. Work a godly sorrow for sin in our hearts, so that we may fear the judgments which You send upon the stiffnecked and rebellious. And since You have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but will have all men to be converted and live; and since the doors of Your Church are always open to those who return to You in true repentance; O most merciful Father, we pray for grace to walk before You in all holiness, and to humbly and lovingly admonish the one upon whom this judgment has now come, in order that he may be brought to repentance, and restored to Your favor through the work of Your good Spirit. May we soon have cause to rejoice about the one for whom we now have sorrow of heart, that Your name may be praised, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

B. Restoration

¶ An announcement is to be made to the congregation, at least a week prior to the public restoration, that the excommunicated person has given evidence of repentance and that he desires to be restored to the communion of the church. If anyone has an objection to the restoration, he is to bring it to the Spiritual Council in the time allocated. At the time of this announcement the minister shall say:

BELOVED CONGREGATION IN THE LORD: It is my privilege to announce to you today, that N , who was excommunicated from our membership, has through the grace of God come so far by this remedy, as well as by good admonitions and your prayers, that being ashamed of his (her) sins, he (she) now desires to be restored to the fellowship of the Church.

We have made diligent inquiry into his (her) spiritual condition and manner of life, and have good reason to believe that he (she) has forsaken his (her) wickedness and returns to the Lord with a broken and contrite heart. Nor has anyone brought a further charge against him (her). Since we are in duty bound by the command of God, to receive such repentant persons with joy, and yet it is necessary to proceed according to good order in these matters, we hereby make known to you that we propose on

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(Here the time of public restoration shall be stated.)

to loose him (her) from the bond of excommunication, and restore him (her) to the fellowship of the Church. Let everyone thank the Lord for the mercy shown to this brother (sister), and beseech God to complete His work in him (her) to his (her) eternal salvation. Amen.

¶ At the time set for the public restoration, if no cause has been demonstrated to prevent it, the minister shall call the brother and the elders before the congregation and say:

BELOVED CONGREGATION: We have previously informed you of the repentance of N , who was cut off from our communion, in order that he (she) might be restored to the fellowship of the Church with your knowledge and approval. And since no one has brought any charge against him (her) in the mean time, we now proceed to his (her) formal and solemn restoration.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that whatever His Church will loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven. By this declaration He informs us that when any person is excommunicated from the Church, he is not by this immediately cut off from any hope of being saved, but that he may again be loosed from the bonds of condemnation. Since God also declares in His Word that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but calls the wicked to turn from his way and live, the Church always hopes for the return of her backslidden children and keeps her bosom open for those who truly repent. Accordingly, the apostle Paul commands that the offender who had been cut off from the Church at his direction, should again be received and comforted, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

Our Lord also teaches us that such forgiveness, being pronounced according to the Word of God, is accounted sure and firm by Him. For as Christ says, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them." Therefore no one who truly repents ought to doubt in the least that he is assuredly received by God in mercy.

¶ Then, addressing the repentant person, he shall say:

NOW, THEREFORE, I ask you, N , do you declare with all your heart, before God and His Church, that you truly repent of the sin for which you have been excommunicated, and do you desire to be restored to the communion of the Church of Christ, and promise to live in all godliness from now on according to the command of the Lord?

Answer: *I do, by the grace of Christ.*

¶ Then the minister shall proceed saying:

And now, in the name and by the authority of Christ and His Church, I release you from the bond of excommunication and receive you into this church. You are restored to the fellowship of Christ, the communion of the saints, and the use of the holy sacraments. May the God of all grace, Who has had pity on you and has given you repentance to life, confirm you in it to the end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Seeing then, beloved brother (sister), that God has received you by His grace, be careful to watch continually from now on so that Satan, the world, and your flesh may not cause you to fall into sin again. Bring forth fruits fitting for repentance; and since God has forgiven you much, love Him much, and walk before Him in newness of life.

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And you, dear congregation, receive this brother (sister) with joy and tenderness, praise God for his (her) return, and rejoice with the angels of heaven over this sinner who comes in repentance today. Since God has forgiven and received him (her), let no one despise him (her). Do not look any longer on him (her) as a stranger, but love him (her) as a brother (sister), and count him (her) a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God.

PRAYER:

Let us return thanks to the Lord.

Merciful God and Father: we heartily thank You that You have given repentance to life to our brother (sister) and have restored him (her) to Your Church. O Lord, grant him (her) the grace of Your Holy Spirit, so that he (she) may not be re-entangled in the Satan's net. Help him (her) to walk in newness of life, and to serve You in all godliness, holiness and righteousness. Grant all of us the grace of Your Spirit, so that we may constantly look up to Jesus Christ, the great Author and Finisher of our faith, to equip us to walk in the way of life. Enable our lights so to shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Help us to watch and pray, and to work with fear and trembling, so that we might be saved and kept in the fellowship of Christ Jesus unto eternal life. Amen.

V. Marriage

¶ The form presented here for the marriage service is preferred; however, any other form in harmony with the Word of God and Reformed practice is permitted. Weddings are under the jurisdiction of the Spiritual Council.

¶ At the time and place appointed for the solemnization of matrimony, the persons to be married shall take their places before the minister, the man having the woman at his left, and all present reverently standing.

¶ The Minister shall say:

DEARLY BELOVED: We are gathered here in the presence of God to join together this man (or, N) and this woman (or, N) in holy matrimony.

¶ The minister shall say, if appropriate:

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

Answer: *I do.*

¶ The minister shall ask the congregation to be seated and shall continue, saying:

Marriage was instituted by God Himself in the time of man's innocency and uprightness. The Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Then God created woman of man's own substance and brought her to the man. Our Lord Jesus Christ

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honored marriage by His presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And He confirmed it as a divine ordinance and a union not to be severed when He declared, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." Furthermore, the apostle Paul set forth the sacred and exalted nature of marriage when he likened it to the spiritual union which exists between Christ and His Church.

The purpose of marriage is the enrichment of the lives of those who enter into this union, the propagation of the race, and the extension of Christ's Church to the glory of the covenant God.

Let us reverently hear what the Holy Scriptures teach concerning the duty of husbands to their wives and of wives to their husbands:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies."

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the Head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."

¶ **At this point the sermon may be preached, after which the minister shall say:**

These two persons are to be joined in this holy state of marriage. If anyone can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, let him now declare it, or else hereafter forever hold his peace.

I require and charge you both that if either of you know any reason that you may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, you confess it now.

PRAYER:

Most holy and most merciful Father, at once the God of nature and of grace, Creator, Preserver and Redeemer of mankind, fill these Your servants N and N with a sense of the solemnity of the vows they are about to make. May they look to You for Your assistance, and enter into these sacred obligations in humble dependence upon Your enabling grace. Grant this, O Father, with the forgiveness of our sins, through Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

EXCHANGE OF VOWS:

¶ **(The couple may face each other, joining hands): Then the minister shall say to the man:**

N, will you have this woman (or, N) to be your wedded wife, to live with her after God's commandments in the holy state of marriage? And will you love her, honor and cherish her, and keep yourself only for her, so long as you both shall live?

¶ **The man shall answer:**

I will.

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¶ **The minister shall say to the woman:**

N , will you have this man (or, N) to be your wedded husband, to live with him after God's commandments in the holy state of marriage? And will you love him, cherish and obey him, and keep yourself only for him, so long as you both shall live?

¶ **The woman shall answer:**

I will.

¶ **Then the man may say, or repeat after the minister:**

I, N , take you, N , to be my wedded wife, and I promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.

¶ **Then the woman may say, or repeat after the minister:**

I, N , take you, N , to be my wedded husband, and I promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful wife in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.

RING CEREMONY:

¶ **Then the man shall put the ring on the third finger of the woman's left hand, and shall say after the minister:**

This ring I give you as a symbol and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

¶ **Then the woman shall put the ring on the third finger of the man's left hand, and shall say after the minister:**

This ring I give you as a symbol and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

¶ **In the case of a single ring ceremony, the minister shall say to the woman:**

Do you, N , receive this ring as a token of your pledge to keep this covenant and perform these vows?

¶ **The woman shall answer:**

I do.

¶ **The minister shall now offer a suitable prayer.**

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¶ **After the prayer, the minister shall say:**

By virtue of the authority committed to me by the Church of Christ and the law of the State, I now pronounce you, N and N , husband and wife in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

¶ **The minister shall cause the husband and wife to join their right hands, and he shall say:**

“What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

¶ **The minister may now say to the couple:**

“You may now kiss each other.”

BENEDICTION:

The Lord our God fill you with His grace, and grant that you may long live together in all godliness and holiness. Amen.

¶ **A sermon shall be included, and suitable Christian music and hymns are appropriate parts of the wedding service.**

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VI. Burial of the Dead

¶ This burial service is for believers and the children of believers. When other persons are to be buried, the service should be modified accordingly.

¶ When the people have assembled, the minister shall begin the service with one or more of these passages from the Holy Scriptures.

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.” *Ps. 124:8.*

“As a father pities His children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” *Ps. 103:13-14.*

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” *1 Tim. 6:7.*

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” *Job 1:21.*

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” *Job 19:25–27.*

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” *John 11:25-26.*

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” *2 Cor. 1:3-4.*

PRAYER:

Almighty and gracious God, our Father in heaven, You are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; lead us, we pray, to put our trust entirely in You. We come to You in the name of Your only begotten and well beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, Who died for our sins and rose again. We beseech You to grant us peace and pardon through His precious blood, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And seeing that we have in Christ a High Priest Who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we come boldly to Your throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help us in this time of need.

We thank You for the precious promises of Your Word. We praise You for the light of the gospel. And we acknowledge Your sovereign will and infinite compassion. Be pleased, therefore, to look upon our sorrow, and for the sake of Your dear Son, enable us to hear Your holy Word, so that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope. Grant us the consolation and peace of the Holy Ghost. May we hold fast our confidence in Your forgiving mercy and the blessed assurance of eternal life; we pray through Jesus Christ Who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, Who rose from the dead and is exalted to Your right hand. Amen.

¶ The following elements of worship may then be used. The order is merely suggested.

Burial of the Dead

¶ A hymn may be sung.

¶ An obituary may be read, if desired.

¶ Scriptures of comfort shall be read. Appropriate Scriptures are these: Psalms: 23; 39:4–13; 90; 103:13–17; 130; of the gospel message of salvation through Christ: John 3:16-17; 10:9–11 and 27–30; Rom. 5:1–11; 8:1–11; of a fruitful Christian life: Prov. 4:18; Dan. 12:3; Mal. 3:16–18; Matt. 25:34–40; Heb. 10:23–25; Jas. 5:19-20; of the gospel promise of resurrection and the life everlasting: Matt. 18:10; Mark 5:35–39; 10:13–16; John 14:1–3, 15–20 and 25–27; 1 Cor. 15:20–28 and 35–58; 2 Cor. 4:16–18; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–11; 1 Pet. 1:3–9; Rev. 7:13–17; 21:1–4 and 22–27; 22:1–7.

¶ A sermon shall be preached.

¶ Another hymn may be sung.

PRAYER:

Almighty and most merciful God, consolation of the sorrowful and support of the weary, Who does not delight in grieving or afflicting the children of men; we pray that You will look down in tender love and pity upon Your servants in this bereaved household whose joy has been turned into mourning. Be pleased to uphold, strengthen and comfort them according to the multitude of Your mercies, so that they may not faint under Your fatherly chastening, but may find in You their strength and refuge; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ The Lord's Prayer may be used, if desired.

¶ The burial service shall then continue at the grave, where the minister shall say:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” *Job 19:25–27.*

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”

1 Thess. 4:13-14.

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” *Job 1:21.*

PRAYER:

Almighty God, You have destroyed death by the death of Your Son Jesus Christ; You have sanctified the graves of the saints by His rest in the tomb,

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and You have brought life and immortality to light by His glorious resurrection, so that all who die in Him abide in hope concerning their bodies, and in joy in their souls. We pray that You will receive our sincere thanks for the victory over death and the grave which He has obtained for us and for all who sleep in Him. Now keep us who are still in the body, in everlasting fellowship with all that wait for You on earth and with all who are around You in heaven. And may we all remain in union with Christ, Who is the resurrection and the life, and Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

COMMITTAL:

Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God, in His wise providence, to take the soul of our deceased brother (sister) out of this world, we therefore commit his (her) body to the ground, looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ **Here shall the minister say:**

“I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” *Rev. 14:13*.

¶ **Or in the case of a child:**

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.” *Mark 10:14*.

¶ **Then the minister shall close the service with this or another appropriate benediction:**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

¶ **Appropriate questions and answers from the Heidelberg catechism may be used in the service at the grave, if desired; such as questions 1,42,45,57,58,60.**

Thanksgiving for a Church Building
SPECIAL SERVICE

Thanksgiving for a Church Building

¶ The congregation may stand, and the following portions from the Psalms may be read by the presiding minister and/or the people. It should be noted by the presiding minister that references to the House of God are to be understood in the New Testament as references to the Church which is God's people and not a building.

“Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He Who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endures to all generations.” *Psalm 100*

“I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together: Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For thrones are set there for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper who love You. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces. For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, Peace be within you. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.” *Psalm 122*

“How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will be still praising You. For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” *Psalm 84:1-4,10*

“The earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness, the world, and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands, and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! And lift them up, you everlasting doors! and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.” *Psalm 24*

¶ The minister shall say:

BELOVED IN THE LORD: We are gathered to set apart this house for the worship of the one living and true God. Let us then dedicate this place to our use for His worship.

Minister: In gratitude for the gracious keeping of the divine covenant throughout past generations, in reliance upon the promise that the gates of hell will

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not prevail against the Church, and in the hope of the eternal glory of the Church triumphant:

People : We dedicate this house for the worship of God in praise and prayer, for the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God and for the celebration of the Holy Sacraments.

¶ **Then the minister shall say:**

Beloved in the Lord: Seeing that it has pleased Almighty God to prosper us in our undertaking to build (or secure) a house for His worship, let us now invoke His abiding blessing, to the end that pure apostolic doctrine and order may be maintained here, and that the Holy Spirit may make His own ordinances effective. In so doing let us reverently look to Him in prayer:

PRAYER:

Almighty and everlasting God, Maker of heaven and earth, we thank You that You dwell in the high and holy place, but also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit. We adore You for Your manifold perfections, for the infinite majesty and glorious beauty of Your being, and for the truthfulness and sanctity of Your divine revelation.

We thank You for Your infinite mercies to us, and in particular, for the gift of Your Son to be our Savior. We praise You for the Church of God, of which He is the only Head and King and of which we are but humble and imperfect members. We acknowledge that we are not worthy to receive the blessings of good providence from Your hand. We especially recognize the abundance of Your great goodness in granting us membership in the Church universal, the spiritual Body of Christ, through Your particular grace.

And now You have put it into our hearts to prepare this house of worship where men may gather for Your service. We earnestly pray that You will watch over and protect this place which we have dedicated in Your name. Please grant that only the pure gospel of the free grace of God may be preached here. May all that is proclaimed be firmly grounded upon the unchanging foundation of Holy Scripture. Grant that no portion of Your sacred revelation may be neglected, but that Your servants who minister here will give due regard to all its parts and thus exhibit its majesty and scope. We pray that by the favor of Your Spirit sinners may be converted to You in this house, and that the saints of God, the members of Your holy body, may be edified and sanctified by the proclamation of Your matchless Word.

May the Holy Spirit of God always be present to guide and illumine those who teach here. May He prepare the hearts of the hearers to receive with meekness the instruction which is presented, so that their lives may truly adorn the doctrine of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

May this house serve to the extension of the kingdom of God. Teach us also to look for the return of the Lord of glory so that we will be renewed in our present service of Him. May we always be prepared to greet Him and to enter with Him into the marriage supper of the Lamb, to dwell forever not in this earthly house but in that holy city where they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lamb is its light.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Thanksgiving for a Church Building

- ¶ An appropriate Psalm or hymn may be sung.
- ¶ Sermon
- ¶ Benediction and Doxology.