

Common Expression

A CANADIAN BAPTIST
MANUAL FOR WORSHIP AND SERVICE

PUBLISHED BY



FOREWORD TO THE 2020 EDITION

This edition of *A Manual For Worship and Service* is a republication and revision of the 1998 edition which built upon the original 1976 document and 1984 revision. The four regions of the Canadian Baptist family cooperated to bring added resources and updated language to the existing manual. There was also agreement that the *New Living Translation* would best suit the majority of our congregations going forward.

There is a felt need for more of our resources to be available electronically and that is one of the primary motivations for this revision. A printed version may be made available at a later date.

The primary content is not dramatically changed, and we are grateful for the expertise that went into the liturgies and service formats already provided. Some alterations to the organization of sections have been made as well as the deletion of dated resources and obsolete practices.

This manual offers some basic outlines for worship services and special occasions which Canadian Baptist pastors and ministry leaders may encounter in their ministry. It is not meant to be exhaustive and we encourage you to seek out additional sources, but we pray this may be a solid and faithful guide for your ministry moving forward.

We are grateful for Paul Matheson as editor of this edition as well as the contributions of each regional minister and their teams for giving insight and direction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A CANADIAN BAPTIST MANUAL FOR WORSHIP AND SERVICE

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PART I

Resources for
**SPECIAL OCCASIONS
IN PERSONAL
AND FAMILY LIFE**

THE CELEBRATION OF BIRTH/ADOPTION

The birth/adoption of a child is an occasion of joy and hope, both for the parents and families and for the faith community. It is also a time when parents and families may be uniquely open to ministry. The purpose of a celebration of birth/adoption is to help parents of a new baby acknowledge and express gratitude to God for this gift of new life, and to experience the joyful support of the church family.

It is important that parents understand that no ceremony, of itself, has the power to change the character of a child, or to alter his/her relationship with God. At the same time, parents who commit their lives to Christ can, with the support of their church family and with the power of the Holy Spirit, positively influence their child's spiritual development.

The following suggestions may be offered by a ministry leader in giving spiritual guidance to parents for themselves and their children:

- Pray for your child's salvation and spiritual growth.
- Read or tell them age-appropriate Bible stories from a young age.
- Establish regular family devotions.
- As a family, regularly attend worship services and be an active participant in your local congregation.
- Integrate faith with everyday life.
- Model Christ-like behaviour.

Congregational Acknowledgment

The congregation may acknowledge a birth or adoption as follows:

- A flower placed upon the pulpit, or other prominent place, during worship.
- A notice of announcement and congratulation in the church bulletin or newsletter.
- A personal gift as a special welcome from the congregation.
- A “Welcome to God’s World” letter to the child.

A home visit may be a powerful moment for outreach and may be an opportune time to provide information about ministries available to young families with babies and toddlers, such as the Nursery, Parent and Child programs, and so on.

A colourful brochure featuring your congregation’s preschool and parent ministries can become a strong outreach tool for such events.

A Home Service of Thanksgiving

A service of thanksgiving in the home is an appropriate way to celebrate the arrival of a new child. The ministry leader, in response to a request from the family, will make an appointment to conduct such a service at a time convenient to the family, and will encourage the presence of extended family and friends. A home service would be designed to include other siblings, to acknowledge the importance of each member of the family and friendship circle, and to draw attention to God’s sovereign care for every child. A flower or gift may be presented on behalf of the church family at this time.

During the ceremony, a few brief and simple comments may be made, emphasizing the privilege given to the family through the gift of this child. It will be an occasion to emphasize that all the potential that God gave to humans is present in this child, who has been entrusted to us so that we might encourage him or her to develop that potential uniquely. Because of the importance of this task, God has provided parents with resources, insight, wisdom and support through the Holy Spirit, through the Bible and through the Church.

Encourage the parents to put their faith and trust in God, and not to rely solely on their own discernment. As God has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ, so God is present with us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Additional scripture resources: *1 Samuel 1:19–20; Psalms 8, 100, 113; Proverbs 23:25; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 19:13–15.*

An Order for a Home Service of Thanksgiving for a New Baby

Opening Remarks

God has indeed blessed this family and home with the precious gift of a child – a [son/daughter] to _____ [parents' names] and a [brother/sister] to _____ [sibling's name(s)]. We pause now to worship God, offering our joy and thanksgiving for the safe delivery of this new little one. Let us all join together to praise God, who has given life to each of us.

Prayer

God our Creator, we praise you. We thank you for the gift of life you have given to each one of us, but especially we thank you now for _____ who has [been born/come] into this family. Thank you, too, for the joy and expectation that has come to us with [his/her] arrival, just as it came to us with _____ [names of other siblings]. Your love and goodness overwhelm us; thank you, our God, for sharing life with us, and for giving us to each other. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Alternate Prayer for an Adopted Child

Merciful God, father and mother to all your children, we thank you that in you we all find welcome, shelter and nurture. We thank you for this child, _____, who has come to bless this family, and for the love of _____ [names of all family members] which has welcomed [him/her] into this home. Give them the joy of caring for _____, and through [him/her], remind us that we all become your sons and daughters by adoption. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Remarks

Prayer

Dear Lord God, you sent your own Son into this world as the child of Mary and Joseph. We thank you for the life of this child, _____, entrusted to our care. Bless these parents as they commit themselves to nurturing _____, with your guidance, so that [he/she] will come to know you through your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to remember that we are all your children, and that we share with you in the important task of parenthood. We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHILDREN AND THE DEDICATION OF PARENTS

In the attempt to maintain Christian integrity, this ceremony is most appropriate for parents who are open to consider some commitment to the Church, preferably to the local congregation. As such, this ceremony has a place in the context of regular Sunday worship, preferably early on in the service, so other young children may observe and/or participate. It is well to remember that particular sensitivity will need to be exercised with respect to blended and single-parent families.

There may be occasions when parents desire to present their child/children in a congregation with which they have not had, or will not have, a continuing relationship. In such a case, it may be appropriate to identify close family and friends present as those who will respond to a modified form of the Commitment by the Congregation.

An Order of Service for Presentation of Children and Dedication of Parents

Introductory Remarks to the Congregation

At this point in our worship of God, we give particular attention to God's gift of children. _____ and _____, the parent[s] of _____, wish to present [him/her/them] to God in the presence of God's people, to dedicate [himself/herself/themselves] to [his/her/their] Christian nurture and to ask you for your support in this great privilege and responsibility.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives, and by his lordship he calls us to gather together as the church. He is the Head of the Church, and we wish to raise our children to follow him.

When a child is born, we are full of hope. We pray that these will be blessed and that, as parents and family, we will do all that is right for our child's nurture. But we know that life in this broken world has its share of sorrow as well as joy, sickness as well as health, poverty as well as riches. The society we live in will demand much from [this child/these children] and from you as parents. The scriptures instruct us to: rely on our faith in Jesus Christ, have a growing knowledge of his Word, and seek to obey his Word with all of our being.

Scripture Reading

Hear now what the Word of God says about children:

"Children are a gift from the LORD."

Psalms 127:3a

"You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up."

Deuteronomy 6:5-7

"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."

Matthew 18:5

"Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.' Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them."

Mark 10:14b-16

Continued on following page...

Commitments by the Parents

Ministry Leader: You have brought _____ [name(s) of child/children] to be blessed today. Do you recognize and solemnly declare your dependence upon Almighty God for the wisdom, help and blessing you will need to guide and nurture your [child/children]?

Parents: We do.

Ministry Leader: Do you commit yourselves to instruct _____ in the teachings of Jesus Christ, to read the Word of God regularly, and to pray both with and for your [child/children]?

Parents: We do.

Ministry Leader: Do you intend to raise up your [child/children] in the church family, with the prayer that, in due time, _____ may receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord?

Parents: We do.

Optional Commitments by Others

[To Siblings]

Ministry Leader: _____, do you promise to love your [brother/sister] _____ and help [him/her] to know God's love?

Siblings: [I/we] do.

[To Grandparents]

Ministry Leader: Scripture declares: "Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged." (*Proverbs 17:6*) There is great joy in seeing a new generation of family raised to know God. So, I ask you the following question: So that _____ [name(s) of child/children] may walk in the abundant life that Christ offers, will you commit, with God's help, to pray for and encourage _____ [parents/parent] in [their/her/his] effort to raise [this child/these children] so [she/he] might receive our Lord's instruction and guidance?

Grandparents: We do.

[To Designated Friends]

Ministry Leader: _____ do you also promise to love and care for _____ [name(s) of child/children], and to support this family in their walk of faith?

Friends: We do.

Continued on following page...

Commitments by the Congregation

[This parent/These parents] are relying upon us, as God's people, to support and help [him/her/them] to raise up [this child/these children] in the faith.

This means [here you may wish to insert some examples of children's ministries in your congregation] volunteering when appropriate in the nursery; teaching in the Sunday School; supporting our children's programs and youth groups; welcoming and treating children and young people as valued members of our church family; being patient with them as they grow and learn; and above all, praying for our children and youth, individually and as a group. If you will make these commitments, please stand and pray with me.

Prayer (In Unison)

Loving Father, we your people pray for [this parent/these parents] and [this child/these children]. Guide them in the ways of truth; sustain them in times of difficulty, and bless them with the joys of life in Christ. We commit ourselves to the Christian nurture of all the children you have entrusted to our care. We offer you ourselves, our time and our gifts in this ministry. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Blessing for Each Child

_____ [name of child], may the Lord bless you and keep you all the days of your life. Amen.

RESOURCES FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

Conversion, baptism, experience of the Holy Spirit, Church membership and serving Christ are all essential to the life of the new believer.

There are a number of critical issues that need to be resolved. Often the first will be uncertainty on the part of the new Christian about what has actually happened. It is important to ground assurance on what Christ has done. Verses like *John 6:47* and *Romans 8:29-31* are crucial.

The urgent task is integration of the new Christian into the body of believers. He or she must be helped to form a new circle of friends, values, priorities and habits. Support will be needed. The simplest and most significant support is a friendly, warm Christian who will invite the person into their home and stay close as he or she matures in the faith. It is important that the new Christian be disciplined by being taught to pray, to study the Bible, to understand spiritual gifts and to cope with the challenges of the Christian life. Where possible, it would be beneficial to provide him or her with a personal study Bible and with an invitation to be part of a Bible study or small group program. Such a group may be the best forum in which to provide human intimacy, ongoing support, and a positive introduction to the scriptures and Christian values.

Normally, the new Christian will be encouraged to attend a class for baptism and Church membership. Such a class would cover matters to do with Christian faith, Baptist principles, and the privileges and responsibilities of Church membership, and would include an introduction to tithing, discovering gifts, the Church Covenant, and the Canadian Baptist family, its ministries, and affiliates.

A new Christian is a key person in winning others for Christ. Thus the encouragement and training in this area will be important.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP

The following publications are recommended for orientation of new believers to membership in a Baptist church:

- <https://baptist-atlantic.ca/our-convention/our-beliefs/>
(CBAP)
- <https://unionbaptiste.com/mission-et-confession-de-foi/>
(UÉBFC)
- <https://baptist.ca/about/what-do-baptists-believe/>
(CBOQ)
- <https://cbwc.ca/resources/church-life/>
(CBWC)
- <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/baptists>
(A concise overview of Canadian Baptists.)
- https://baptist.org.uk/Groups/297778/Believers_Baptism.aspx
(Several PDF files on Baptist basics. British based.)
- <http://baptistdistinctives.org/>
(Contains many resources on Baptist history, life and polity. American based.)
- Bartol, John W. *Life In Christ; A New Relationship. Studies for Membership Classes or Small Groups*. Saint John, N.B.: Evangelism Commission, UBCAP, 1997.
- Jones, William H. *What Canadian Baptists Believe*. Niagara Falls: JBTS Publishing House, 1980.
- Johnson, Gordon G. *My Church; A Manual of Baptist Faith and Action*. Evanston: Harvest Publications, 1973.
- Simpson, George E. *Basic Baptist Beliefs*. Church Leadership Unlimited, 1991.
- Warren, Gordon C. *Basic Baptist Beliefs*. Baptist Federation of Canada, 1968.
- Nick Lear. *Making a Splash*. Baptist Union of Great Britain.
(Book) Product code: BU1007. ISBN: 978-0-901472-54-0
https://baptist.org.uk/Shop/Products/495670/Making_A_Splash.aspx

THE BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS

Believers baptism is mutually undertaken by the body of believers and the individual believer. The believer openly declares repentance from sin and personal faith in, and commitment to, Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Baptism is ideally administered in the presence of the congregation, and given a central focus in the worship service. When conducted with the proper balance of reverence, dignity, simplicity and personal warmth, the beauty and symbolism of baptism by immersion can and should effect a powerful witness. There is no excuse for careless or indifferent administration of this ordinance.

The Initiative for Baptism

The request for baptism should be the natural outcome when a new believer is exposed to the teachings of the New Testament on the Christian life.

The ministry leader and congregation which take seriously the Great Commission will provide continuing opportunities to challenge people to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and to obey his ordinances. The ordinance of believer's baptism should be stressed as the appropriate response of the new believer to Christ's commands.

The Interview of Candidates

It is to the Church that Christ assigned the task of administering the ordinance of baptism. We ought, therefore, to take great care in our approach to it, so that the experience of obeying Christ in this mode becomes an occasion of great joy and celebration for the candidate.

The preferred process should include:

- a period of instruction with the ministry leader or other qualified instructor.
- an interview with two or more congregational leaders who will report back to the board of elected leaders or membership body.
- a personal testimony spoken or written to the congregation before or at baptism.

Practical Instruction of Candidates

To enable the fullest spiritual participation of the candidate in his or her own baptism, several matters need to be considered.

To help the candidate realize and appreciate that baptism has as one of its purposes the public witness of personal faith in Christ, the candidate should be encouraged to invite relatives and friends to observe the baptism. The congregation may offer to send invitations on behalf of the candidate to individuals of the candidate's choice, to mark this significant occasion.

At least one, preferably two, congregational leaders should be assigned to help the candidate during the baptism. Careful attention should be given to acquaint the candidates with all of the details of the baptismal procedure, such as the baptismal robes, appropriate garments, towels, hair drying equipment, etc. Helpers should be present to assist in the changing rooms.

Prior to the actual baptism, the ministry leader should walk through the entire process, including a demonstration of the act of baptism, so that the candidates are thoroughly acquainted with it.

Baptismal Technique

The ministry leader should master a technique of baptism so as to make the actual baptism a beautiful act of worship for all in attendance. Most importantly, the candidate should feel secure and confident. Each ministry leader should develop a personal technique which is most comfortable and dignified.

The following is a recommended procedure:

- The ministry leader enters the baptistry and faces the congregation, usually as a hymn or chorus is being sung, or music played.
- The ministry leader addresses the congregation, with appropriate scripture passages, an explanation of the ordinance and prayer (see suggestions in the following “The Baptismal Address”).
- The candidate enters and stands in front of the ministry leader. The candidate may be introduced and give a personal testimony at this time.
- The ministry leader then addresses the candidate and/or questions the candidate regarding his or her faith.

After proper positioning, the ministry leader proceeds to pronounce the baptismal formula and conduct the immersion.

The candidate stands with feet reasonably close together and one foot slightly ahead of the other. The knees should be slightly bent so that the candidate can lean backwards, gradually casting his or her weight on the buoyancy of the water and the ministry leader’s hand which is positioned at the base of the candidate’s neck. The candidate grips his or her own right wrist with the left hand and grips the ministry leader’s left wrist with the right hand, thus affording the candidate stability.

The tendency of most candidates is to hold quite firmly with rigid arms, thus affording the ministry leader a leverage to gently submerge the candidate. Bending the knees, the candidate is able to lean back as the ministry leader takes the weight of the person being baptized upon the right hand. Care should be exercised to create the least commotion and splashing of water.

A brief prayer invoking the Holy Spirit or conferring a blessing upon the candidate is appropriate here. Clapping by the congregation is becoming more common in our congregations, so be aware of local practice.

A verse of a hymn or chorus of the candidate’s own choosing may be sung as the newly baptized believer leaves the baptistry.

The symbolism of submission can be recognized in a variety of forms. Candidates who have health concerns, are fearful of water or particularly nervous of being dipped backwards in baptism can be invited to kneel as the ministry leader gently submerges their head. Exceptions can be worked out in your congregation’s own constitution or practice.

The Baptismal Address

Though believer's baptism is a repeated occurrence in the life of a congregation, it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the believer. As well, non-believers, friends and family of the new Christian may be present, any of whom may never have witnessed this ordinance. For these reasons, this act should be interpreted on each occasion, with attention to the message of the gospel which is symbolized by this act.

Some appropriate selections from scripture are suggested in the order that follows. Additional scripture resources: *Matthew 28:16–20; John 14:21–23; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:35–38; Romans 6:5–11.*

The following are statements that may be used to communicate the biblical significance of baptism.

Baptism is:

- an ordinance (or commandment) of Jesus Christ, established and given to his people (or to the Church) to be obeyed by those who have come to salvation by faith.

Baptism for the believer is:

- an act of faith and obedience,
- the following of Jesus' example,
- a public confession/testimony,
- a vow of commitment to Jesus Christ,
- a pledge and sign of belonging to Christ and his Church, and;
- an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual experience.

Baptism is a symbol of:

- the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
- the death to sin and resurrection to a new life of the believer,
- the cleansing of regeneration,
- the gospel that saves,
- the changes already accomplished in this life,
- the resurrection of the dead of all believers.

It is the responsibility and privilege of the believing community to administer the ordinance to those who, having repented of their sins and having received Jesus Christ as their Saviour, present themselves for baptism.

Continued on following page...

The baptism may be followed by the Lord's Supper where the candidates would receive their first communion and be welcomed into Church membership. After the worship service, a reception in honour of the candidates may be held.

Since this is the most important commitment that a person will make in their lifetime, every effort should be made to acknowledge it, for the sake of the individuals and of the Church body. An appropriate gift, such as a Bible, a devotional book, etc. may be given to mark the occasion.

Upon reception into Church membership, the new member should also be presented with a copy of the Church Covenant, a church history (if available), the congregation's bylaws or constitution, and materials on the ministries of the congregation. Some congregations compile these materials into an attractive "New Members Packet." (This same packet may be presented to new members who have joined the congregation through letters of transfer.)

An Order of Service for the Baptism of Believers

Baptismal Hymn

Scripture Reading

“Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. ‘I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,’ he said, ‘so why are you coming to me?’ But Jesus said, ‘It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.’ So John agreed to baptize him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.’”

Matthew 3:13–17

“Jesus replied, ‘I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.’”

John 3:5–8

“Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.”

Romans 6:1–4

Address to the Congregation

Prayer

God of Grace and Mercy, we give you our humble and heartfelt thanks for our Saviour Jesus Christ, who died for sins, was buried and was raised on the third day. We ask you to accept _____, your [child/children], as [he/she/they] come[s] to you in baptism. We pray that [he/she/they] may be united by faith with Christ in his Church, and receive forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, as you have promised. May _____ walk with Christ throughout life. Keep [him/her/them] strong in faith, in hope and in love. Pour out on [him/her/them] the rich gifts of your grace, that [he/she/they] may serve you in the building up of your Kingdom. Protect _____ in all the trials and temptations of this life, and, at the end, extend your precious gift of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Continued on following page...

Address to Candidates

[If giving a verbal testimony:]

_____, you have already shared your faith with this congregation and its leaders, and on their recommendation, we are glad to baptize you. However, so that your faith and intention are clear to all present, would you share briefly your experience of Jesus Christ?

[If not giving verbal testimony:]

_____, will you answer the following questions?

Ministry Leader: Have you confessed your repentance toward God, and your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?

Candidate: I have.

Ministry Leader: Will you sincerely try, depending on the guidance of the Word and the Spirit of God, to follow Christ and to serve him in the fellowship and mission of his Church?

Candidate: I will.

The Baptismal Statement

_____, upon your profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in obedience to the Lord's command, I now baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

[After the baptism, the ministry leader may address the congregation:]

Look, here is water. What is it that prevents you from being baptized?

THE CHRISTIAN WEDDING

Ordained ministry leaders are asked to perform weddings of people who have a wide range of spiritual convictions and experience; inevitably, this will include non-Christians. To prevent possible confusion or dissension, it is advisable for the ministry leader to determine with the elected congregational leaders a policy for the weddings of people from outside the congregation; this should cover pastoral participation as well as the use of church facilities. Ministry leaders should not be compelled to go beyond their personal convictions or regulations established by the Canadian Baptist body in which they serve.

It is important that the wedding ceremony represents the spiritual realities and convictions of the couple being married. The ministry leader should be careful to explore this area with the couple, remembering that this stage in a couple's life offers a ministry opportunity, both to believers and non-believers.

It is recommended that the ministry leader arrange for a series of pre-marital counselling sessions with the couple. Not only does this enhance the future relationship with the ministry leader, but also provides an opportunity for the couple to explore areas in which their relationship can be strengthened. Matters such as communication, conflict, hopes and dreams, shared values and commitments, sexuality, finances, spirituality and religious practices are all topics that may be given consideration.

No matter how routine weddings may become to a ministry leader, each one should be a personal and joyful celebration of a spiritual reality in the lives of the participants. It should never be about "just performing a wedding." The warmth and interest of the ministry leader is one of the vital keys to a meaningful wedding ceremony and to the continuing involvement of the newly-married couple within the congregation.

Marriage Regulations

Since marriage is a provincial responsibility and regulations may differ somewhat, ministry leaders should be careful to observe the respective legal requirements. This applies to Publication of Banns, licenses, waiting period and the like.

Those who wish to officiate at a wedding will be required to obtain a license that permits this from the province in which the wedding will take place. (Note: This license is valid only in the province in which it is issued.)

If the officiant wishes to perform a marriage in another province, a temporary license may be available from that jurisdiction. Ministry leaders are encouraged to contact the Canadian Baptist body in which they serve for assistance.

The Wedding Service: An Overview

Essentially, a wedding must have two components: the public vows or promises the couple makes to each other and the proclamation made by the authorized officiant. The construct of the service will depend upon the wishes of the couple being married as well as the practice and theology of the ministry leader and congregation. Below is a detailed sequence of a typical wedding ceremony:

Family and friends gather, guided by ushers. Some couples wish to have their friends and family sit on their respective side, while others prefer to have everyone sit where they wish. Immediate family will be seated near the front.

The lighting of family candles makes an appropriate beginning for the wedding. Immediately prior to the Processional, the parents will be seated. Once seated, the mothers or both sets of parents may come forward and light two candles that have been placed on either side of a central unity candle placed on the communion table. Alternatively, some couples prefer containers of different coloured sand placed on the table with an empty, larger container placed in the middle.

The wedding Processional then begins. The groom and his party assemble at the front with the ministry leader, as prearranged. The congregation is asked to stand. The bridal party assembles at the back, as prearranged. All remain standing until the end of the Call to Worship or Invocation Prayer.

It is recommended that the order of the bride's and groom's names be alternated throughout the ceremony so that one does not constantly take precedence over the other.

After the first hymn is a good time for the ministry leader to state the policy regarding permissible photography, video-taping, or other concerns. Alternatively, this may be done at the very beginning of the service, or simply stated in the printed wedding program.

Continued on following page...

A Scripture Reading is appropriate at any of several points in the service.

Scripture resources: *Genesis 1:27-28a; Genesis 2:15-24; Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7; Matthew 19:4-6; John 15:9, 12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Ephesians 3:14-19; Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 John 4:7-12.*

The Pastoral Counsel to the Wedding Guests may take the form of a brief address on the nature of marriage in society, and on the responsibilities of those around the couple to support, encourage and pray for them. The Pastoral Counsel to the couple may include counsel regarding the importance of God in their union, and personal encouragement to remain true to the vows they are making.

If family candles have been lit, the couple may proceed to the communion table following the Declaration of Marriage and the Prayer for the Couple. There each may take their family's candle, lit at the beginning of the service, and together light the central candle, returning the two side candles to their respective holders. Similarly, sand may be combined in a central container, if that symbol is chosen instead.

Depending upon convenience and the choice of the couple, the Signing of the Register may take place in the sanctuary or in an adjacent room. Special music is appropriate while the signing takes place.

Afterwards, the newly married couple may be introduced to the guests using the form of address which they choose.

Alternate Wedding Ceremonies

At times, the ministry leader will receive a request to conduct a simple wedding ceremony in a chapel, home or other location; it may be a second marriage for one or both partners, or a wedding for immediate family only. The wedding may take a variety of forms and the resources offered below should prove helpful in structuring the appropriate ceremony for each specific situation.

In all cases, care should be taken to design a ceremony that is personal, dignified and mindful of the sacredness of the occasion.

An Order of Service for a Christian Wedding

Musical Prelude

Lighting of the Family Candles (optional)

The Processional

Call to Worship

“Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Unless the Lord builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted.”

Psalm 124:8; Psalm 127:1a

Opening Remarks to Guests

A wedding is the occasion when a man and a woman publicly declare their love and commitment to one another in the presence of God. By its nature it is both a solemn and a happy event. For those of us gathered here, it will be a sharing in an important and love-filled moment in the lives of two people we know, love and appreciate. For _____ and _____, this ceremony will reflect what they believe to be God’s will for their lives.

_____ and _____ are pleased and honoured that you have come to share this important and sacred time with them, and pray that God’s blessing will be upon us all.

As we are gathered together in this place of worship to witness the public exchange of vows between _____ and _____, let us now turn to the One who is the Author of all life, and the Source of redeeming love in Jesus Christ. Let us pray to the living God.

Invocation Prayer

God of Grace and Mercy, we thank you for the gift of life, for family and friends, and for the love shared by _____ and _____. As we come together today in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for the presence of your Holy Spirit in this wedding ceremony, and in the lives of _____ and _____ as they begin their life together. We pray also that we might be found faithful in our continuing support of this new family. Our loving God, we commit to you the very sacred moments that follow, and pray for your blessing on _____ and _____, today and in the years to come, as they seek to serve you. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn (Optional)

Continued on following page...

The Pledge

_____ and _____, you have already made public your intention to be married. No one has shown any just cause why you may not be lawfully married, nor have you yourselves declared any impediment. So that your faith and integrity of purpose may be evident, would you respond to these questions:

[The questions are directed separately to, and answered separately by, the bride and groom.]

Officiant: _____, do you pledge to live with _____ in a manner consistent with God's design for marriage? Do you promise to love [him/her], honour [him/her], and be faithful to [him/her] in times of need and blessing? Do you pledge, with God's help and to the best of your ability, to establish honest, open and loving communication between yourself and _____? Do you promise to remain faithful to _____ as long as you both shall live?

Bride/Groom: I do.

Alternative traditional form

Officiant: _____, will you have this [man/woman] to be your [husband/wife]; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love [him/her], comfort [him/her], honour and keep [him/her], in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to [him/her] as long as you both shall live?

Bride/Groom: I will.

Alternative contemporary form

Officiant: _____, do you choose _____ to be your [husband/wife]? Will you love, respect and honour [him/her], sharing your plans and interests, ideals and emotions, through crisis and anxiety, through joy and pleasure, caring for [him/her] in life-long commitment?

Bride/Groom: I will.

Question of the Parents of the Bride and Groom (Optional)

Officiant: _____ and _____; _____ and _____: Do you give your blessing upon this marriage of your children? Do you promise to support _____ and _____ in their life together as husband and wife?

People: We do.

Continued on following page...

Question of the Congregation (Optional)

Officiant: Will all of you witnessing these promises, do everything in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage and surround them with your love and prayers?

People: We will.

Officiant: _____ and _____, since you have publicly stated your willingness to be partners in God's plan for your marriage, hear now what God's Word has to say concerning marriage and love.

Scripture Reading**Pastoral Counsel to the Couple and Guests**

See scripture resources and suggestions for Pastoral Counsel listed previously.

An Optional Prayer

In a few moments, _____ and _____, you will declare your love to each other before God. You will make a covenant for the rest of your lives. To keep what you are about to promise, you will need God's help. Let us pray:

Our Father in heaven, _____ and _____ will soon declare their love for each other. May you bless them as they join in marriage, that they may give their vows to each other in the strength and spirit of your faithful love. Let the promise of your Word take root and grow in their lives as a couple. Grant them vision and hope to persevere in trust and friendship all their days. By your grace, may they continue to walk as disciples of Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.

The Marriage Vows

_____ and _____, you are about to enter a sacred covenant of love and commitment with each other. As you pledge your vows to each other in the presence of God, will you join your right hands.

[The groom, then the bride, repeat the vows to each other.]

_____, I take you now to be my [wife/husband]. I promise to love you, to trust you, and to cherish you. I will love you when we are apart and when we are together, in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad times. I pledge myself to be faithful to you as long as we both shall live.

Alternate traditional form

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my [wife/husband], to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

Continued on following page...

Alternate contemporary form

_____, with joy I make this vow to be your [husband/wife]. I promise to love and to cherish you, no matter what life may hold for us, to laugh with you in joy, to grieve with you in sorrow, to grow with you in love, and to be faithful to you as long as we both shall live.

The Exchange of Rings

Wedding rings are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual truths. Being one unbroken circle, they symbolize unending love, and as they are worn, they symbolize to others your union in marriage. These rings are not what keep you together. It is the love that you have for God and each other. May these rings be a constant reminder of that love.

[As each places a ring on their partner's finger, they repeat the following words.]

Bride/Groom: _____, I give you this ring that you may wear it,
as a symbol of the vows we have made this day.

Declaration of Marriage

Now that you, _____, and you, _____, have exchanged marriage vows in the presence of God, and in this company, and have sealed those vows by the joining of hands and the exchange of rings, I declare you to be husband and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together let no one separate. Amen.

Prayer for the Couple

God of love and faithfulness, as _____ and _____ have just committed themselves to this sacred and joyful obligation, we are very conscious of their need for your grace and help, as they travel through life together. We pray that their love will be enriched by your love and that their way will be guided by your wisdom. Grant to them patience to handle their differences, forgiveness to cover their misunderstandings, courage to face the difficulties of life, and inner peace to comfort them in times of distress. Grant them continuing joy in each other, and a deepening love which reaches out to those around them. Above all, may their lives and their home be filled with the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Lighting of the Unity Candle (Optional)

Prior to the beginning of the service, _____ and _____'s parents lit a candle, a symbol of their family of origin. Now, _____ and _____ will light the centre candle, a symbol of the new family they are creating through their marriage.

Continued on following page...

Mixing of Sand (Alternative)

_____ and _____, as a visible sign of the commitments you have made, I now invite you to pour these two containers of sand together.

One container of sand represents you, _____. And the other container represents you, _____. As you freely give yourselves to each other over time, so your lives will intermingle and become inseparably united. These grains of sand represent who you were, who you are, and who you will be. In this life-long relationship of marriage, you are forming something new and beautiful.

The Benediction

“May the LORD bless you
and protect you.
May the LORD smile on you
and be gracious to you.
May the LORD show you his favor
and give you his peace.”

Numbers 6:24-26

Signing of the Register

Presentation of the Bride and Groom

It is my privilege and pleasure to present to you _____ [the designation by which the couple chooses to be known].

PART II

Resources for
**PASTORAL CARE
AND VISITATION**

CARE-GIVING AND VISITATION

The ministry of care is part of the calling of the congregation. The following guidelines are no substitute for training in counselling and crisis response, but they provide guidance for the ongoing ministry of care. The aim of this ministry is to mourn with those who mourn, rejoice with those who rejoice and bear one another's burdens in love.

General Visitation Principles

- The first goal of the ministry of care is to communicate the love of Christ.
- Each person offered care is assumed to be worthy of respect and each situation is unique.
- A visit from a Christian care-giver includes, but should go beyond, being social.
- Some visits may involve very little talk. Just being with an individual or family in a time of transition, illness, death or other crisis can make a difference.
- In itself, listening is ministry. Listening helps the person to express feelings, clarify thoughts and break out of isolation.
- Out of respect for personal boundaries, permission should be sought before issues are pursued deeply, or suggestions are made. This includes asking permission before offering prayer.
- Confidentiality should be carefully guarded. But confidentiality is not to be confused with secrecy or anonymity. Keeping a confidence still allows us to consult with professionals and to observe the law. (For example, there is a legal obligation to report if one suspects a person may be a danger to themselves or others.)
- Care-givers, including pastors, should have a trusted and experienced advisor whom they can consult, and with whom they can reflect on difficulties and concerns.
- When in doubt, consult.
- Prayer offered as a part of a visit can be an extension of care, catching up the feelings and needs that have been expressed, and providing a context of hope and faith. Intuition will guide when prayer is appropriate.

Specialized Forms of Visitation

Bereavement visitation is a unique privilege of the congregation. As representatives of the faith community, we have access to grieving families and individuals, long after the work of the funeral director, for instance, is finished. Plan home visits at the one month and one-year mark (at least). Make contact on significant anniversaries during the first year, and balance practical help with listening and enabling. Be prepared to caution against significant lifestyle or locale changes in the first twelve months and validate feelings throughout. Be informed about support groups, especially for special cases such as coping with terminal illness, the death of a child, or death from suicide or acts of violence. Be aware that grief is a process and there is no right way to grieve, nor is there a “right” thing to say. Instead, focus on being present with the individual(s) or family.

Newcomer visitation is part of the ministry of hospitality of the Church and should be friendly, warm and nonthreatening. Always make an appointment in advance. Be prompt. Provide introductions. Inquire about current circumstances and past church experience. Be prepared to listen. Plan to be brief, as a rule. Provide a brochure or hand-out detailing congregational programs, if possible. As you conclude, discern whether prayer may be appropriate.

Hospital or nursing home visitation may primarily be a ministry of presence that offers assurance of the continuing care and concern of the Church to someone who is temporarily in crisis or is shut-in. Cooperate with institutional personnel and regulations. Sit (or even kneel) so that you are on eye level with the person you are visiting. Inquire about their situation, offer to lead in prayer and, depending on the circumstance, keep the visit reasonably brief so as to not tire the patient.

Visitation with those in conflict with congregational leadership. Conflict and disagreement are perennial features of group life and require an appropriate response. It should be noted that although some problems cannot be fixed and some situations will not be resolved, people in conflict need to be heard and treated with respect and compassion. As a general rule, visit with a partner. Clearly identify the reason for your visit, listen and take notes. (Let them know you will be doing this). Paraphrase what you heard for affirmation from the person being visited and clarification for yourself. Provide any pertinent information that may clarify the issues. Offer to convey concerns to appropriate groups or individuals on behalf of the person you are visiting. Conclude with an offer to follow up with them, and lead in prayer, if given permission.

Where character assassination or abusive treatment is encountered during the visit, name this and leave if it continues.

When action is eventually taken, consistent with the concerns expressed by those in conflict, be sure to advise them of the action, even if they have left the congregation to worship elsewhere. Do not act, or even suggest that you will take action, without careful consideration.

Danger Signs in Visitation

In the course of both routine visitation and crisis responses, care-givers may see evidence, or hear reports, of serious individual and/or family problems. The following list is not exhaustive but may provide a starting point for response. Typically, a care-giver may need to pursue one or more of the following actions:

- Consult
- Refer
- Report
- Encourage
- Provide

The assumption here is that no care-giver will be expert in all areas of addressing needs. A readiness to consult and refer to expert colleagues, denominational officials, legal advisors, professional counsellors, medical personnel and trauma specialists will strengthen ministry.

Domestic violence: When children may be victims of domestic abuse, report immediately to the local office of Child and Family Services. This is the law. When spouse abuse or elder abuse may be occurring, consult an immediate supervisor, refer victims to community agencies (provide brochures about the agencies, if possible), encourage removal from the scene of violence and provide ongoing emotional and spiritual support. Do not confront the abuser directly, since this may rebound onto the victim or victims.

Sexual abuse: When children may be victims of sexual abuse, report immediately to the local office of Child and Family Services. This is the law. Encourage adult victims to make a report to appropriate civil or employment authorities in cases of rape, assault and harassment, and/or refer to community resources (sexual harassment officers, rape crisis centres, hospitals and women's shelters). Provide ongoing care and support. If the alleged offender is a member of the congregation, consult denominational officials immediately. If the alleged offender and the alleged victim are in the same congregation, each needs to receive separate provision for care. If the abuse is in the distant past, encourage the victim to seek therapy and refer her or him to appropriate agencies.

Drug and alcohol abuse: Substance abuse is a chronic disability that will compromise most attempts at pastoral or other interventions until it has been addressed directly. Encourage the individual to make contact with community agencies, Twelve Step support groups and/or refer to counsellors who specialize in these issues. Provide ongoing support and care. Remember: This problem usually encompasses those closest to the substance abuser and they too will need care.

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Mental health crisis: The following behaviours alone or in combination may indicate that an individual has entered a phase of a mental health crisis or that one with a history of mental illness has gone off needed medication: excessive paranoia, atypical activity levels, delusions, hallucinations, suicidal thoughts or ideations, changes in the ability to care for oneself, withdrawal or acts of violence. Consult a health care professional or immediate supervisor, family members and/or community experts.

If the mental health crisis does not include suicidal thoughts or ideations, call your provincial Mental Health Crisis Line for direction and encourage a trip to the doctor (may offer to accompany). Report to police if it seems the individual may be a danger to self or others.

Serving Communion During a Visit

For suggestions regarding the conduct of communion in the context of visitation, see *An Order for the Celebration of Communion in a Private Setting* at the end of Part III, Resources for Services of Worship.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALING

The New Testament instructs us that in times of trouble, where doubt, fear and grief collide, believers are to rally for prayer, in order to seek God's guidance, to offer encouragement and to act as witnesses. In particular, James 5 specifies that those who are leaders in the congregation may be called upon to exercise the Ministry of Healing, traditionally involving the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, and prayer. This action, as with other acts of grace, is to be expressive of the Body of Christ manifest in the believing community.

The purpose of the ministry of healing is to minister grace to those who are distressed because of physical suffering, including those closest to the actual sufferer. Although concrete touch is employed and prayers are offered for physical healing, it is primarily spiritual healing and strengthening that is sought, something which may be evidenced in any or all of those who participate. Preparation will certainly include prayer, and in some cases fasting, for those who will assemble, along with a short explanation concerning the physical condition of the sufferer and the general format and goals of the time together.

The place and time and duration should be chosen with a thought to the comfort and ease of the sufferer and their family. It is assumed that a group of three or more will assemble for this service, each of whom will be prepared to participate in the laying on of hands and prayer, although only one will do the actual anointing. (Olive oil may be used for this purpose.)

The following order is based on historical Christian practices and not meant to limit ministry.

An Order for a Service of Healing

Welcome, Introductions and Instructions

Opening Statement

Sisters and brothers in Christ, we are gathered here as representatives of the Body of Christ, to make tangible both God's presence in this moment and our own love and concern for _____. We are here because we feel we have been led to pray for physical, emotional and spiritual healing. We are here to cooperate with God's own purposes, purposes we know to be directed by love and a desire to save. We acknowledge that the outcome of this time together is in God's hands and by trusting God in this moment, by gathering in faithfulness and love as we have been taught, we have already achieved what is ours to control. We are, all of us, dependent upon God for the life in our physical bodies and for the life eternal that we are called to know. Acknowledging this ultimate reliance, let us pray together.

Opening Prayer

God of Life and Hope, we humbly bow before you now as we undertake together to be channels of your healing love in this place, and particularly in the life of this our [sister/brother], _____. We seek assurance of your grace and care, as we plead for soul-health and bodily strengthening. We ask for your blessing on what we do here. Grant that we might have eyes to see you at work among us and within us, in this hour. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Matthew 11:28-29

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."

Ephesians 3:16-19

And James gave this instruction to the church, "Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord."

James 5:13-14

Continued on following page...

The Laying on of Hands

[To be sustained throughout the anointing and prayer.]

Anointing With Oil

In keeping with the practice of our forbears in the faith, we will use this oil to mark the forehead and the palms with the sign of the cross ...

[While anointing the forehead]

May God the Father and Creator wrap you round in grace and blessing, breathing into you the breath of life eternal. Amen.

[While anointing the right palm]

May God the Son and Redeemer, who lived and died and rose again, grant you peace in your inner being. Amen.

[While anointing the left palm]

May God the Holy Spirit and Sustainer strengthen you and keep you, and bring you into the brightness of Christ's rising, according to God's mercy and grace. Amen.

Spontaneous Prayers for Healing from those Assembled***Closing Prayer***

Divine Presence of Peace, we are your children and we know it. We confess our reliance upon you and declare our full-hearted trust in the power of your love. Be with us now as we close this time together with the words our Lord taught us to pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

As another option, a healing service could be held either during a Sunday morning service or as a special event or evening service. The service could help the congregation heal from past hurts of a ministry leader's abuse of power, church splits, etc. Choose songs, scriptures, and other methods to help the service unfold for the congregation in a way that is authentic, creative and healing.

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Pastoral response at the time of a death will include, but in most cases go beyond, the planning of a funeral or memorial service. The ministry leader's task will be to provide comfort and reassurance as a representative of Christ and of the believing community, to assist the bereaved in their grieving and to facilitate procedural matters, where possible.

Funeral Arrangements

It is fitting for the ministry leader to offer to accompany the family on their visit to the funeral director in order to provide a familiar presence, to help interpret information and to represent the family's interests, particularly if the funeral home personnel are not attentive to their wishes. Where funeral home visitation is included in the plans, the ministry leader may attend with the family.

Depending on local custom, and the involvement of the deceased or the bereaved with the congregation, the service may be held at the church. In that event, the ministry leader should oversee arrangements for facility use, musicians, care-takers, office staff, sound operators, and/or caterers, as well as provisions for service bulletins, volunteer pall bearers, ushers or other special requirements. Delegate responsibility whenever possible.

Pastoral Care in Service Planning

The ministry leader will want to arrange a visit with primary family members and friends to collect information and requests for the service. This meeting should be an opportunity to meet pastoral needs as well as procedural ones and deserves attention and care.

At this meeting, the ministry leader invites suggestions for the service, for example: hymns, songs, music, scripture and other readings, decorative elements and food. It helps to provide the bereaved with an outline of a typical service as well as information about fees and conditions.

Once these details have been attended to, the ministry leader continues ministering to the bereaved by initiating a conversation about the deceased and his/her influence on those present. The ministry leader should take careful notes to use in writing the eulogy and other parts of the service. The pastoral priority is to allow feelings to be voiced and memories recounted in the company of those most closely affected. When negative recollections are offered they should be received with care and respect.

Putting It All Together

The purpose of the funeral/memorial service, from a pastoral point of view, is to offer a ministry to the bereaved and to provide a formal closure to the initial phase of grieving. Therefore, the service must be sensitively personalized and should also place the experience of grief in the context of Christian hope and comfort. While recognizing the importance of the eulogy in a funeral service, this should not eclipse other distinctly Christian elements, including the proclamation of good news, hope, healing and resurrection life.

The purpose of the eulogy is to assist the process of grieving by providing a summary of the life and influence of the deceased, validating the sense of loss and providing closure. If the deceased was a person of faith, the eulogy may provide a witness to the gospel through a testimony to his/her commitment. As a rule, notes taken during the family visit will provide recurring themes around which the eulogy may be constructed, incorporating select and appropriate anecdotes into the narrative.

If the death occurred as a result of violence, or involved a young person, the ministry leader will need to acknowledge feelings of shock and anger in the service. If mental illness has played a role or if a suicide has taken place, special sensitivity will be required. Where positive material about the deceased is slight, there will have to be careful handling to provide helpful perspective. When it is possible to do so with integrity, it is important to assure the bereaved of their significant place in the life of the deceased, and/or of their faithful care of the deceased, and/or of the degree to which their grief is shared in the community.

Scripture readings and musical selections, prayers and transition pieces should be chosen for their potential to offer spiritual comfort to the bereaved. It is therefore most appropriate to make selections that contain promises of comfort and assurances of God's presence and love.

Additional scripture resources: *Psalms* 23; 27:1, 4-9; 91; 103:1-14; 121; or 139:1-12; *Job* 19:21, 23-27; *Isaiah* 25:6-10; *Lamentations* 3:17-26; *John* 11:21-26; 14:1-6, 18-19, 27; *Romans* 8:35, 37-39; *1 Corinthians* 15:50-58; *Matthew* 5:3-10; 11:25-30; *John* 6:35-40; *2 Corinthians* 4:7-18; *1 Thessalonians* 4:13-17; *1 John* 4:7-18a; *Revelation* 21:1-7.

Circumstances of Death

In recognition of the fact that the circumstances of the death should be reflected with sensitivity in the service, three sets of statements and prayers are provided here as guides for the creation of a personal ceremony in three different contexts:

- *Option 1:* In the case of the death of a Christian believer of senior years
- *Option 2:* In the case of an untimely or violent death
- *Option 3:* In the case of the death of someone of uncertain faith or about whom little is known

An Order for a Funeral or Memorial Service

Prelude

Entrance of the Chief Mourners and Ministry Leaders

Opening Statement

Option 1:

Dear Friends, we are gathered today to remember and to celebrate the life of _____. Tears have a place here because our lives are poorer for [his/her] loss. On the other hand, our sorrow is relieved, for we know that because of _____ we have much to celebrate and remember with gratitude. Even though we are still reeling from the finality of [his/her] passing, we know that [he/she] has now found victory over death in [his/her] Saviour, Jesus Christ. We have to be clear that our tears are for our own loss, not [his/hers], for [he/she] is in a place where tears and death and sorrow will never touch [him/her] again. The same God through whom _____ has victory over death is present and available to us in our need today. Let us turn then to God for comfort, strength and guidance. Let us pray ...

Option 2:

It is my privilege today to welcome you to this service of remembrance and farewell for _____. We gather today with some confidence that _____ is at this moment safe in the hands of God, forever free from questions and alarms. The same cannot be said for us and that is part of why we are here today. We are here because we need to be with others who care, to say collectively that _____ mattered, that grief is real and that we will not let this family stand alone. Still, many of us are confused and numbed by what has happened. Some of us are frightened as we confront the fragility and uncertainty of life. And there are those of us who are just plain angry, angry at God most of all, perhaps, for letting this happen. And so we have come, carrying confusion and rage and sorrow and a desire to be faithful; and we have come to the right place. We have come to a place where we can be with others who share our grief and to a place where we may seek God, even with all our questions. Let us seek this God now in prayer. Let us pray ...

Option 3:

Every now and then, as we make our way through this life, there are moments when we are given a chance to pause and to reflect upon what life means, on who we are and how we mean to live our lives. This is one such moment. Death provides us with opportunities to do an inventory of our lives, to let go of that which no longer has a claim upon our devotion and to lay hold of that which we determine to treasure. We are here today to pay tribute to the life and memory of _____. If we are willing, it can also be a time to reflect upon our values, our habits and our commitments. Death is a great mystery, even as life itself is a mystery. We will ponder these mysteries together in this hour. Let us pray ...

Continued on following page...

Opening Prayer*Option 1:*

God, our Creator and Source of All Life, we bow before you in need of your sustaining grace and love. As we gather here today we know that we ache inside. We are burdened with questions and longings. We carry regrets for things undone or unsaid. We carry an awareness of our own fragile mortality. Still, we thank you for the mystery of your presence among us today, as we gather with gratitude for the privilege of knowing _____, and for the impact [he/she] has had upon us. Draw close to us, we pray, and grant us assurance of your compassion and companionship, even in the face of death. We bring to you the mix of feelings and questions and memories that stir inside us, and ask for your blessing and peace. Amen.

Option 2

God of All Compassion, we come to you today, full of questions and full of sorrow, full of confusion and full of anger, too. We need you to meet us as we are, in our grief and in our need. We acknowledge that we only know in part and that, when it comes to things like this, we are at best looking through a darkened mirror. We know only too well today the limits of our own power and wisdom. Still, we are looking to you for comfort and peace, for a beginning point for making sense out of something senseless, for a place to stand when the foundations of our lives have been shaken. Be with us in this time together and begin to work your healing in our lives. Amen.

Option 3:

God of Mystery and Hope, we come before you today, carrying all the diverse needs and longings, joys and sorrows that fill our hearts. We pray that in this time together we might truly honour _____'s memory and your presence among us. God, we come to you with many unanswered questions, seeking peace, bowing before the mysteries that surround us. Meet us here, we pray. Heal and comfort, strengthen and soothe us. Deal with us in whatever ambivalence or anxiety we find ourselves in this moment, and grant your blessing upon us, in the name of and for the sake of Christ. Amen.

Welcome and Instructions**Hymn/Song****Scripture Readings**

It is a common experience at times like this to feel at a loss for words. We long for meaningful ways to express what we hope and believe. At just such times, we may discover that the words of others who have gone before us, especially words that have stood the test of time, may focus our minds and give voice to what we cannot quite say ourselves. Listen then, with me, to hear the Word of Life, as we find it in a selection of Bible readings today ...

Continued on following page...

Special Music and/or Special Reading***Eulogy******Instrumental Musical Interlude******Prayer****Option 1:*

Divine Presence, Author of Life, Giver of All Good Things, we offer you thanks today for the life and memory of _____. We give thanks that [his/her] life touched ours and for the difference that has made for us. We thank you for [his/her] _____ [some personal strengths]. We thank you, too, for the assurance that [he/she] is now safe with you in perfect health and peace and fullness of joy. Our God, even as we thank you for the joy of knowing [him/her], we ask you to reach out and touch those of us who feel [his/her] loss most keenly. Touch us with your peace, we pray. Answer our weakness with your strength, our despair with your hope, our grief with your comfort. Hear our prayers and meet our needs we pray, with confidence in Christ. Amen.

Option 2:

Life-Giving, Hope-Stirring God, you know us through and through. You know that we simply cannot make sense of this death, or understand why it had to be this way. You know that we want to push away the terror and find a hand-hold as we work through our pain. Thank you God that you are big enough to absorb our questions and our anger, to hold us in our feelings of helplessness. Be to us strength and grace and hope, for we need your touch. We do thank you for _____'s life, for the joy [he/she] brought into the world. We thank you that [he/she] is safe with you now. We also pray special blessings today upon those who were closest to _____. Be near to them. Give them the strength and grace to take one day at a time. In all things let them deal gently with each other and be carried tenderly into recovery and new hope. And now, we pray, have mercy upon us, for we need your presence and your peace. Amen.

Option 3:

God of Life and Meaning, we thank you today for the gift of life, and for all that makes it sweet and worth the living. We thank you for the beauties of the world around us, and for the friends and family who enrich us day-to-day. Help us to live each day as if it really mattered, and to seek and find your face in the world around us and in each other. We commit _____ to you at this time, knowing that this funeral today is part of a long process of learning to cope with the reality of [his/her] death. We release [him/her] to you with gratitude, asking that you will help us as we attempt to continue on in our lives without [her/him]. Whether we live or die, we know we are in your hands, and we will rest there, confident in your mercy and grace. Amen.

Continued on following page...

Hymn/Song

Benediction

Option 1:

May Christ's grace attend you, may God's love surround you, and may the Holy Spirit keep you, now and forever. Amen.

Option 2:

May the LORD bless you
and protect you.
May the LORD smile on you
and be gracious to you.
May the LORD show you his favor
and give you his peace.
Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

Option 3:

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say." Amen.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Exit of Casket and Pall Bearers, and/or Chief Mourners and Ministry Leaders

An Order for a Committal Service

Scripture Reading

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.”

John 11:25

“Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever!”

Revelation 1:17b-18b

The Psalmist wrote,
“Even when I walk
 through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
 for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
 protect and comfort me. ...
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
 all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
 forever.”

Psalm 23:4, 6

Opening Remarks

Our task here, in this brief time of committal, is a very simple one. We will first observe a moment of silence, in which you may choose to pray silently or to have a moment for your own thoughts. Then I will say the words of committal. Finally, I will close with a prayer and words of blessing. Let us begin, then, with a time of silence.

Silent Reflection

Words of Committal

Option 1:

In full confidence that a gracious God has already received the soul of _____, we now tenderly commit [his/her] [body/ashes] to the ground. We commend [his/her] spirit into God’s keeping. Into the earth, which God created, we commit [his/her] [body/ashes], earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. In doing this we are not as those without hope, for we know and believe that God has given the gift of eternal life and that this life is kept safe for us in Christ. Trusting, therefore, that _____ is safe in God’s care, let us pray ...

Continued on following page...

Option 2:

And now, in confidence and hope, we say our final goodbyes to _____, committing [his/her] remains to the earth, and [his/her] soul to God. May [his/her] spirit find peace, as the earth takes back her own, according to God's own wisdom. Let us pray ...

Committal Prayer

Gracious God, whether we live or die, we know that we are in your care. Here then, we commit to your unfailing love the soul of one we have known and cherished. We thank you now for the gift of memory and for all that is positive and life-affirming that will live on in us from this day. We thank you also for the strength we receive here in this moment from each other. May all those who mourn today know your comfort, strength, courage and guidance in the days to come, we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction

And now may God who is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, mightily bless each one of you and give you peace. Amen.

An Order for an Extended Graveside Service (Funeral and Committal Together)

Opening Statement

We are gathered here today to honour the life and memory of _____. With reverence and dignity we commit [his/her] [body/ashes] to the earth and [his/her] spirit to God. Today we say goodbye to one who has made a significant contribution to our lives. We gather in the name of Christ our Saviour. Let us pray...

Prayer

Gracious God, Author of Life, Heart of All Wisdom, we are grateful to be in this place together to honour the life of one who has meant so much to us. Draw near to each of us we pray and grant to us what we need for this day. Grant us comfort and peace, strength and courage, joyful memories, a sense of the caring community that surrounds us and an extravagant measure of your love. We thank you that we can know that _____ is in your care and we thank you that you have blessed us through [him/her] in life. Continue with us and bless this time of observance and remembrance, we pray, for the sake of Christ, our hope and our comfort. Amen.

Scripture Reading

As we encounter the reality of death and of life, we know that we are in the presence of a great mystery. This mystery has astounded people down through the ages. Part of the inheritance we have from the scriptures is a testimony both to this mystery and to the Christ, the one who is the Mystery Who Saves. Hear then, words from the Bible, words that speak into our experience:

Jesus said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going." 'No, we don't know, Lord,' Thomas said. 'We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!'"

John 14:1-7

Continued on following page...

The Apostle Paul wrote these words, “Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:35, 37–39

Brief Tribute to a Life

Moment of Silence

Words of Committal

We are gathered to say farewell, and in this moment we lay to rest the remains of _____ with gratitude and respect. Into the earth, which God created, we lovingly commit [his/her] [body/ashes], trusting that [his/her] spirit is already safe in God’s keeping. This is earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We do this with grateful hearts for the rich blessing it has been to have been touched by [his/her] life, and with trust in the eternal promises of God. Let us pray...

Prayer

O God, our Creator, Healer and Friend, whether we live or whether we die, we know that we are always in your care. We thank you for _____, for the privilege of sharing life with [him/her], and for the knowledge that [he/she] is with you, and that [he/she] is at peace. It is hard to say our goodbyes today. It is hard because our loss of [him/her] is real and we already miss [him/her]. Surround us, we pray, with your gentle care, grant us your peace in our grief, and help us to comfort one another, for we ask it in Christ’s name. Amen

Benediction

And now may the God of our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and keep you, and guide you in the ways of peace. Amen.

PART III

Resources for
**SERVICES
OF WORSHIP**

CALLS TO WORSHIP

The call to worship is an invitation to participate in worship. It is founded upon the conviction that, in the act of worship, God and God's people meet. It should be brief, often simply taking the form of a scripture text.

A special service or a particular time of the church year may suggest a Call to Worship that reflects the occasion. Suggestions for such are also included in this section. In addition, here are some further resources for Calls to Worship and the Church Year:

- Brandt, Leslie F. *Psalms Now!*
St. Louis:Concordia Publishing House, 1973.
- Counsell, Michael, ed. *2000 Years of Prayer*.
New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2002.
- Ellis, Christopher J. and Myra Blyth, ed. *Gathered for Worship*.
Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005.
- Penner, Carol. *leadinginworship: Worship Resources in a Mennonite Voice for Ears of All Kinds*. <https://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship/>
- Longhurst, Christine. *Re: Worship*. <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/>
- Woodward, Jenee. *The Text This Week*. <http://www.textweek.com/>

Calls to Worship for Any Service

The following Calls to Worship from scripture are appropriate for use in any service at any time of the year.

For use by a leader

“Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.”

1 Chronicles 16:34

“I was glad when they said to me,
‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’ ...
Come, let us tell of the LORD’s greatness;
let us exalt his name together.”

Psalms 122:1; 34:3

“It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praises to the Most High.
It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning,
your faithfulness in the evening.”

Psalms 92:1-2

“Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!
Worship the LORD with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy.
Acknowledge that the LORD is God!
He made us, and we are his.
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise his name.”

Psalms 100:1-4

“Praise the LORD!
I will thank the LORD with all my heart
as I meet with his godly people.
How amazing are the deeds of the LORD!
All who delight in him should ponder them.”

Psalms 111:1-2

Continued on following page...

“This is the day the LORD has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Psalms 118:24

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies!
The whole earth is filled with his glory! ...
Come, let us worship and bow down.
Let us kneel before the LORD our maker.”

Isaiah 6:3; Psalm 95:6

“This is what the LORD says:
‘Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
Could you build me a temple as good as that?
Could you build me such a resting place?
My hands have made both heaven and earth;
they and everything in them are mine.
I, the LORD, have spoken!’”

Isaiah 66:1–2a

“Come, let us return to the LORD. ...
Oh, that we might know the LORD!
Let us press on to know him.
He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn
or the coming of rains in early spring.”

Hosea 6:1a, 3

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and
you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.”

Matthew 7:7

“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy
burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you,
because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.’”

Matthew 11:28–30

Continued on following page...

For use as responsive calls to worship

Many texts from the scriptures also lend themselves to a responsive Call to Worship between the worship leader and the congregation. The following selections may be used in this way, or simply read by the leader only.

Leader: The earth is the LORD's and everything in it.

Response: The world and all its people belong to him.

Leader: For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas,

Response: And built it on the ocean depths.

Psalms 24:1-2

Leader: Who may climb the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

Response: Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies.

Leader: They will receive the LORD's blessing,

Response: And have a right relationship with God their savior.

Psalms 24:3-5

Leader: Trust in the LORD, and do good.

Response: Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

Leader: Take delight in the LORD,

Response: And he will give you your heart's desires.

Leader: Commit everything you do to the LORD.

Response: Trust in him, and he will help you. ...

Leader: Be still in the presence of the LORD,

Response: And wait patiently for him to act.

Psalms 37:3-5, 7a

Leader: God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

Response: So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! ...

Leader: The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;

Response: The God of Israel is our fortress.

Psalms 46:1-3, 7

Continued on following page...

Leader: Come, let us worship and bow down.
Response: Let us kneel before the LORD, our maker!
Leader: For he is our God.
Response: We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.
Psalm 9:6-7

Leader: Sing a new song to the LORD!
Response: Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
Leader: Sing to the LORD, praise his name.
Response: Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
Leader: Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. ...
Response: Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods.
Psalm 96:1, 4

Leader: Let all that I am praise the LORD;
Response: With my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
Leader: Let all that I am praise the LORD;
Response: May I never forget the good things he does for me. ...
Leader: Praise the LORD, everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom.
Response: Let all that I am praise the LORD.
Psalm 103:1-2, 22

Leader: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
Response: His faithful love endures for ever.
Leader: Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies. ...
Response: Let them praise the LORD for his great love and for the wonderful things he has done for them.
Leader: Let them exalt him publicly before the congregation.
Response: And before the leaders of the nation. ...
Leader: Those who are wise will take all this to heart;
Response: They will see in our history the faithful love of the LORD.
Psalm 107:1-2, 31-32, 43

Continued on following page...

Leader: Those who trust in the LORD will find new strength.

Response: They will soar high on wings like eagles.

Leader: They will run and not grow weary.

Response: They will walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Leader: Seek the LORD while you can find him.

Response: Call on him now while he is near.

Leader: Let the wicked change their ways.

Response: And banish the very thought of doing wrong.

Leader: Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them.
Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.

Isaiah 55:6-7

Leader: The time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth,

Response: The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.

Leader: For God is Spirit,

Response: So those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

John 4:23,24

Additional scripture resources: *Psalm 84:1, 24; Psalm 95: 1-3; Psalm 105:1-4; Psalm 118:1, 4, 29; Psalm 121:1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8; Psalm 136:1-3, 26; Psalm 146:1, 2, 10; Psalm 148:1-3, 12, 13. Amen.*

Continued on following page...

Leader: The work of the Creator is visible.

All: Let us respond with praise.

Leader: The example of Jesus is apparent.

All: Let us respond with obedience.

Leader: The wind of the Spirit is blowing.

All: Let us respond with joy.

Leader: The word of God is calling.

All: Let us worship in spirit and in truth.¹

Leader: Gather us in, Mysterious Maker God.

All: That being close to you we will understand your intention for creation.

Leader: Weave us into one, Sweet Savior of All.

All: That living your ways we will create communities of faith and peace.

Leader: Gather us in, Powerful Spirit of Renewal.

All: That treasuring the past we will boldly shape the future.

Leader: Weave us into one, Holy One in Three.

All: That women and men together may be the signs of your presence, the weavers of your communities and the witnesses to your coming. Gather us in this day so that we might gather strength from You. Amen.²

Combined Calls to Worship and Prayers of Approach

“Let the whole world bless our God
and loudly sing his praises.
Our lives are in his hands,
and he keeps our feet from stumbling.”

Psalms 66:8-9

Let’s pray:
Here we are Lord,
filled with life and breath,
citizens in the land of the living,
by your grace.
You know our paths,
and the help we will need
to keep our feet firm.
In this time of worship,
equip us to be your upright followers,
in Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.³

“Taste and see that the LORD is good.
Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!”

Psalms 34:8

Let’s pray together:
We come to church hungry, Lord!
We are hungry for comfort,
hungry for love,
hungry for a new way of living,
hungry for your word.
Thank you for giving us this place
and this time to worship,
and we are eager to taste your goodness
in community, with our brothers and sisters.
Bless us as we feast on the Bread of Life today.
In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.⁴

Calls to Worship on the Nature of Worship

These responsive Calls to Worship, based on scriptural themes, lead the congregation into a consideration of the nature of worship.

Leader: Worship is the divine calling the human to come to the waters and drink. We hear the call and come to receive the water of life.

First Reader: As a thirsty land crying out for rain;

Second Reader: As a sheep lost in the wilderness pleading for rescue by the good shepherd;

First Reader: As the same sheep nestled in the arms of its rescuer;

Second Reader: As a hungry heart seeking for love;

Leader: We hear the voice of our Father. O come, let us worship and bow down.

Leader: Worship is the submission of our nature to God.

Response: It is the quickening of conscience by God's holiness,

Leader: The nourishment of mind with God's truth,

Response: The purifying of imagination by God's beauty,

Leader: The opening of the heart to God's love,

Response: The surrender of the will to God's purpose,

Leader: O come, open your souls to the influence of God's Spirit!
We come here to worship,

First Reader: As a prodigal returning to the father,

Second Reader: As a soul standing in awe before the mystery of the universe,

First Reader: As a poet enthralled by the beauty of a sunrise,

Second Reader: As a person listening through a tornado for the still small voice,

First Reader: As a drop of water in quest of the ocean,

Second Reader: As time flowing into Eternity,

First Reader: As a worker pausing to listen to a strain of music,

Second Reader: As a child climbing into the lap of its father,

Leader: O, come let us worship.

Calls to Worship for Special Themes

Special themes and times in the rhythm of church life suggest the use of Calls to Worship that enhance the focus of the service.

The Lord's Supper

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Matthew 11:28-29

Jesus said, "God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied." ... He also said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Matthew 5:6; John 6:35

"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and we will share a meal together as friends."

Revelation 3:20

"Seek the LORD while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.

Let the wicked change their ways

and banish the very thought of doing wrong.

Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them.

Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously."

Isaiah 55:6-7

"This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."

Hebrews 4:15-16

Continued on following page...

Missions

“The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.
All the families of the nations will bow down before him.
For royal power belongs to the LORD.
He rules all the nations.”

Psalm 22:27-28

“The LORD is in his holy Temple.
Let all the earth be silent before him.”

Habakkuk 2:20

“Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout the world.”

Psalm 46:10

“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. ... He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us.”

Acts 17:24-27

“Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.
Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise!
He is to be feared above all gods.”

1 Chronicles 16:23-25

Calls to Worship that Celebrate the Church Year

For centuries many Christian faith communities have used the Christian calendar. This calendar retells the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as the birth of the church which is built upon him. Seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost walk us through this redemptive story. The calendar can be a helpful tool for discipleship, planning worship, teaching Sunday School, and lifting up the name of Jesus in our congregations.

Lectionary readings for each day include Old Testament, Psalms, Epistle and Gospel readings. Note that there are many forms of lectionaries that are used across denominational lines. The Revised Common Lectionary is one of these that is used within our Baptist family. Some ministry leaders follow these readings in planning their sermons, others include the readings for the week in their bulletins, and others create artistic expressions in their worship to mark the changing seasons. There are many creative ways to use the calendar and many resources available online as well as with Christian resource distributors.

Readings for the Revised Common Lectionary can be found at:

<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>

Another lectionary that has been developed is the Narrative Lectionary.

Information can be found at:

<https://spiritandtruthpublishing.com/narrative-lectionary/>

With these thoughts in mind, the following suggestions are offered for calling congregations to worship at special times during the church year.

Continued on following page...

Advent

Advent is the beginning of the church year, and in this season we are invited to wait. Along with nature around us waiting for the return of the sun, we wait for the birth of the Word-made-flesh. We are invited to resist impatience and transform waiting into an art form of anticipation and joyful expectation.

“The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.
For those who live in a land of deep darkness,
a light will shine.”

Isaiah 9:2

“For a child is born to us,
a son is given to us.
The government will rest on his shoulders.
And he will be called:
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His government and its peace
will never end.
He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of
his ancestor David
for all eternity.”

Isaiah 9:6-7a

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
are only a small village among all the people of Judah.
Yet a ruler of Israel,
whose origins are in the distant past,
will come from you on my behalf. ...
And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD’s strength
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. ...
And he will be the source of peace.”

Micah 5:2, 4, 5a

“The LORD himself will give you a sign. Look! the virgin will conceive a child!
She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is
with us’).”

Isaiah 7:14

Continued on following page...

Christmas

During Christmas, the long awaited season, we celebrate God coming to dwell with us in our humanity. We celebrate the ordinary and everyday, which will never be either again because God has entered the world and transformed the boundaries between sacred and earthly. If God can be found in a barn, is there anywhere that God might not be?

“I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all the people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord — has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!”

Luke 2:10b-11

“Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,
“Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

Luke 2:13-14

“Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

Luke 2:15

“Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light shine for all to see.
For the glory of the LORD rises to shine on you. ...
All nations will come to your light;
mighty kings will come to see your radiance.”

Isaiah 60:1, 3

Continued on following page...

Lent

During Lent, we are offered the opportunity to engage in the difficult parts of the process of becoming whole. Choosing to focus on that which we need to give up in order to become whole allows us to explore ways of reforming the patterns of our lives. The traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and giving to the poor are offered as a means by which to reunite the spiritual and the material dimensions of our lives.

“When you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:3-4

“When you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

“When you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:17-18

“The high and lofty one who lives in eternity,
the Holy One, says this:
‘I live in the high and holy place
with those whose spirits are contrite and humble.
I restore the crushed spirit of the humble
and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts.’”

Isaiah 57:15

“Come close to God, and God will come close to you. ... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.”

James 4:8a, 10

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.”

Psalms 51:10

“I will give them singleness of heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart, so they will obey my decrees and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God.”

Ezekiel 11:19-20

Continued on following page...

Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday introduces a deep paradox: that the same ones who cried “Hosanna!” crucified Christ within a few days. On this day we are confronted with the fickleness of our own hearts.

“Tell the people of Jerusalem,
‘Look, your King is coming to you.
He is humble, riding on a donkey—
riding on a donkey’s colt.’”

Matthew 21:5

“Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all
around him were shouting,
‘Praise God for the Son of David!
Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Praise God in highest heaven!’”

Matthew 21:9

“Open up, ancient gates!
Open up, ancient doors,
and let the King of glory enter.
Who is the King of glory?
The LORD of Heaven’s Armies—
he is the King of glory.”

Psalms 24:9-10

Continued on following page...

Maundy Thursday

On Maundy Thursday, we remember the example of service which Jesus gave us as he washed the disciples' feet. The term Maundy comes from the word for the new commandment (or mandate) which Christ gave that night, to love one another as Christ loved, in just as basic a way of service. Believers gather around the table on this night and share the Lord's Supper.

"Since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."

John 13:14-15

"Now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

John 13:34-35

"God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied."

Matthew 5:6

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

John 6:35

Good Friday and Easter

During Easter, we move from the quiet introspection of Good Friday to the best news of all that we have been waiting to hear: He is not here, he has risen!

"He was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed."

Isaiah 53:5

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16

Continued on following page...

Pentecost

On Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the Holy Spirit. God comes to his people, not in human form, as at Christmas, to be God-with-us, but as Spirit to be God-within-us. We welcome the gifts, enthusiasm, courage and life which the Spirit brings.

“Then, after doing all those things,
I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your old men will dream dreams,
and your young men will see visions.
In those days I will pour out my Spirit
even on servants—men and women alike.”

Joel 2:28-29

“Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty wind-storm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.”

Acts 2:2-4

“The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Galatians 5:22-23a

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. ... A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.”

1 Corinthians 12:4, 7

Continued on following page...

Thanksgiving Day

“Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!
Worship the LORD with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy.
Acknowledge that the LORD is God!
He made us, and we are his.
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the LORD is good.
His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.”

Psalms 100:1-5

“Come, let us sing to the LORD!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come to him with thanksgiving.
Let us sing psalms of praise to him.
For the LORD is a great God,
a great King above all gods.”

Psalms 95:1-3

“May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.
Then the earth will yield its harvests,
and God, our God, will richly bless us.
Yes, God will bless us,
and people all over the world will fear him.”

Psalms 67:5-7

THE CONFESSION OF SIN AND THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

When Isaiah entered into God's presence, he could not escape his condition: "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven's Armies."

Isaiah 6:5

Like Isaiah, when we come into God's presence, we can be keenly aware of our state. We are sinners. Confessing our sins in corporate worship is an opportunity to readjust our posture. Though we are sinners, in Christ we have been redeemed. God has reconciled us to God's own self. When we confess our sins, we reaffirm who God is and who we are. Thus, confession of sin and the assurance of pardon represent a significant expression of the personal and communal nature of worship. When we have worship services that are only upbeat and positive, it denies people a chance to express that real life is messy and that we do not always have it right. Worshippers need a place to take responsibility for their wrongful action and be reminded that God is gracious to those who confess their sins.

Ministry leaders should take care to avoid superficial expressions and strive to reflect the nature and circumstance of the particular worshipping community. Preparation may be aided by a mood of quiet and solitude prior to a responsive or unison reading.

The confession sequence should consist of a Call to Confession, a spoken and or quiet Confession, and an Assurance of Pardon. The Call prepares and draws attention to the discipline of confession and repentance. The Confession expresses our sorrow. It is the laying down of our burdens at the foot of the cross. It is also stating our desire for transformation and redemption. The leader concludes this expression of worship with an Assurance of Pardon or forgiveness offered in Jesus' name. Prior to pronouncing the assurance, the leader may clarify for the congregation that confession and repentance reflects not only a "turning away" from sin but also a "turning toward" God's leading. The assurance should be an audible statement sharing the hope in forgiveness.

Calls to Repentance from Scripture

“If any of the people—men or women—betray the LORD by doing wrong to another person, they are guilty. They must confess their sin and make full restitution for what they have done.”

Numbers 5:6b-7a

“You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.

You do not want a burnt offering.

The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.

You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.”

Psalms 51:16-17

“People who conceal their sins will not prosper,

but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.”

Proverbs 28:13

“Seek the Lord while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.

Let the wicked change their ways

and banish the very thought of doing wrong.

Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them.

Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.”

Isaiah 55:6-7

“Therefore, go and give this message to Israel.

This is what the Lord says:

‘O Israel, my faithless people,

come home to me again,

for I am merciful.

I will not be angry with you forever.

Only acknowledge your guilt.

Admit that you rebelled against the Lord your God

and committed adultery against him

by worshiping idols under every green tree.

Confess that you refused to listen to my voice.

I, the Lord, have spoken!’”

Jeremiah 3:12-13

“Repent, and turn from your sins. Don’t let them destroy you! Put all your rebellion behind you, and find yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.”

Ezekiel 18:30b, 31a

Continued on following page...

“Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord.”

Acts 3:19–20a

“God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

Acts 17:30–31

“If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

1 John 1:8–9

Responsive Confessions

Leader: “Let the wicked change their ways
and banish the very thought of doing wrong.
Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them.
Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.”
Isaiah 55:7
Let us confess our sins to God and ask forgiveness through
Jesus Christ our Saviour:
O God, Creator of the Universe, Lord of all life, you have set
us in families. You have given to each of us an appointed
task, making us citizens here on earth. We confess that in
our homes we have not always lived together in unity and
love. We have shown a lack of consideration and have been
rude, unloving and unforgiving, and we have not shared
fully in the tasks and duties or in the joys and recreations of
those we say we love the most, our family.

Response: Forgive us, O Lord.

Leader: We confess that at work, we have not always worked hard
and well. We have sometimes withheld the help and service
or the praise and reward due to our co-workers. We admit
that we have not done all our work with the intention of
pleasing you.

Response: Forgive us, O Lord.

Leader: We confess that as citizens of the world we have not shared
fully and responsibly in the affairs of neighbourhood and
nations. We have been too preoccupied with our rights and
advantages and not concerned enough with the needs and
welfare of others. We have lacked the courage to advocate
and strive for justice, freedom and peace for all people.

Response: Forgive us, O Lord. As we have forgiven those who have
wronged us, forgive us the wrong we have done and the
good we have left undone; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Continued on following page...

Leader: “Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”

Psalm 139:23-24

Let us confess our sins to God and ask for forgiveness
through Jesus Christ our Saviour:

Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we confess to you
that we are sinners. Our actions have made us unclean and
unfit to be in your presence. We have sinned against you by
thought, word, and deed. Therefore, we seek your mercy and
implore your grace, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Response: Merciful God, you have given your only begotten Son to die
for us. For his sake grant us pardon for all our sins. By your
Holy Spirit, increase in us our knowledge of your love and
will for us, that we may truly understand and obey your
word, that by your grace we may come to everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: “If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves
and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to
him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to
cleanse us from all wickedness.”

1 John 1:8-9

Response: “Have mercy on me, O God,
because of your unfailing love.
Because of your great compassion,
blot out the stain of my sins.
Wash me clean from my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.
For I recognize my rebellion;
it haunts me day and night. ...
Don’t keep looking at my sins.
Remove the stain of my guilt.
Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
Do not banish me from your presence,
and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.”

Amen.

Psalm 51:1-3, 9-12

Continued on following page...

Leader: Jesus said, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37-40

With a consciousness of what God expects of us, and an awareness of our failure, let us come to God and confess our sin, seeking God’s forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Saviour:

Response: God of Love, God of Holiness, and God of Mercy, we acknowledge that we have sinned against you, in the things we have thought, in the things we have said, and in the things we have done. We confess that we have not loved you with all our heart and soul, with all our mind and strength; nor have we loved our neighbours as much as ourselves. We ask that you would not withhold your love from us, and that through Jesus Christ you would be merciful to us and forgive us our sins. By the power of your Holy Spirit help us to love more fully, so that love for you and others may be foremost in our hearts and that we may lovingly follow you, in the steps of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: In the parable of the Prodigal Son, it is recorded of him that when he came to himself he said, “I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you.’”

Luke 15:18

If we are as conscious of ourselves as we ought to be, let us also come to God, confess our sins and seek God’s forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Saviour:

Response: Heavenly Father, we are conscious that we have sinned against heaven and you. We have chosen to walk in darkness rather than light. We have taken upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ but have not always walked with him in his way. Self love and self indulgence have been our priority.

Therefore, we pray that you would have mercy on us. In the name of Jesus Christ forgive our sins. Cleanse us of our guilt. By your word and your Holy Spirit renew our consciences, enable us to live and love according to your purposes, and help us to offer forgiveness to others. Hear us in the name of Jesus Christ and for your glory. Amen.

The following scriptures can be read in unison as prayers of confession:

Psalms 2:1-7; Psalm 51:1-17

General Prayers of Confession

Most Holy and merciful Father; we acknowledge and confess in your presence, our sinful nature. We are prone to evil and slow to do good. Our shortcomings and offenses are against you. You alone know how often we have sinned: We have wandered from your ways, wasted your gifts, and forgotten your love. O Lord, have mercy on us. We are ashamed and sorry for all the ways in which we have caused your displeasure. Teach us in our errors, cleanse us from our secret faults, and forgive our sins, for the sake of your dear Son, our Saviour. Send your purifying grace into our hearts, that we may truly live in your light and walk in your ways, according to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord, we ask you to forgive our sins and set us free from them:

- We confess to the sin of pride: We have been sure of our own goodness and importance and have looked down on others. Help us appreciate the true worth of other people.
- We confess to the sin of envy: We have been displeased when others have been more successful or sought after than we have been. Help us to be glad when others prosper.
- We confess to the sin of anger: We have lost our temper and nursed grievances. Help us to be patient and understanding of every one.
- We confess to the sin of self-indulgence: We have had enough and to spare, yet have neglected the needs of others. Help us to deny ourselves so that others may not be in want.
- We confess to the sin of unchastity: In one way or another, we have used sex wrongly. Help us to create and uphold right relations between men and women, inside marriage and outside it.
- We confess to the sin of anxiety: We have worried about many things. Help us to trust you and see us through.
- We confess to the sin of laziness: We have been luke-warm Christians. Make us eager to do your will. Amen.

O God, you so freely pardon all who repent and turn to you. Fulfill in every repentant heart your promise of redeeming grace. Forgive our sins and negligence, cleanse us from guilt and keep us walking in the way of holiness and fruitfulness, that we may love and serve you all the days of our lives. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Continued on following page...

God of righteousness and justice, you have shown us the way of life in which we should walk. We confess that we have sinned against you. You alone have power to pardon. You have offered to us forgiveness through Jesus Christ, your Son. Be pleased, therefore, once more to forgive our sin and to remove our guilt. In turn, grant to us the wisdom to know your will, the willingness to walk in its way, and the power to achieve your purposes, through Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Lord God of heaven and earth, be attentive to hear the prayers of your servants. If you were to record only our iniquities, O Lord, not one of us could dare to enter your presence. But you have offered to us, through Jesus Christ, your Son, forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. We confess that we know your expectations of us, but we are not always willing to fulfill them. We acknowledge as well, that indifference and lethargy have taken root in our hearts. Lord God forgive us. Establish us again in the way of life, truth and fruitfulness; to the glory of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Creation

O God, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen:
You place us in your creation,
and you command us to care for it.
Your works declare glory and splendor,
and you call us to praise and reverence.
Where we have degraded or destroyed earth's bounty,
forgive us.
Where we have taken beauty and majesty for granted,
have mercy upon us.
Where we have become estranged
from the creatures with whom we share this planet,
grant us your peace.
Renew us in the waters of baptism,
refresh us with the winds of your spirit,
and sustain us with the bread of life.
In the name of Jesus Christ,
and for the sake of the new creation, we pray. Amen.⁵

A Prayer for Reconciliation

Hear our prayer for those who gather here today to seek reconciliation between our peoples. Give us a sense of justice, give us an awareness of new beginnings. Thank you, God, that you promise us your fresh new start each day of our lives. Guide us, God, so that ancient wrongs may be redressed, broken promises forgiven, and a new covenant forged. Open our minds, our mouths, our hearts, our whole beings to your healing presence, as we seek ways to walk together. We pray for wisdom for our leaders, our elders, and ourselves. Our God and Creator, Great Spirit, listen to our prayer. Walk with us, and guide us as we walk with one another. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.⁶

Assurances of Pardon

Our God has said,
“I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake
and will never think of them again.”

Isaiah 43:25

Let us put our trust in God’s Word, and be assured of our forgiveness.

To the children of faith, God has said,
“I have swept away your sins like a cloud.
I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist.
Oh, return to me,
for I have paid the price to set you free.”

Isaiah 44:22

Let us accept the acts of God on our behalf and return to fullness of fellowship with God.

The promise of God to his people is that he will bring health and healing, prosperity and security. Most significant of all is his promise, “I will cleanse them of their sins against me and forgive all their sins of rebellion.”

Jeremiah 33:8

If others have received our forgiveness, the promise of our heavenly Father is that He will forgive us. May the blessing of forgiveness through Jesus Christ be ours through faith and lead to renewed obedience.

Based on Matthew 6:14

As you have come to God in repentance and confession, may you experience the fulfillment of God’s promises, in these moments, and in the days to come.

“Brothers [and sisters], listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins.”

Acts 13:38

“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ... For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.”

Romans 5:8, 10, 11

Continued on following page...

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”

Romans 8:1-2

May your hearts and your minds rest in the promise and assurance of freedom from condemnation through Jesus Christ.

“He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.”

Ephesians 1:7

Be assured that your faith in Christ has secured your freedom from the shame of your sin. You are a forgiven person.

“This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it:
‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’”

1 Timothy 1:15a

“If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

1 John 1:8-9

Our faith and our hope is in Jesus Christ. Rest assured that in him your sins are forgiven.

Additional scripture resources: *Psalm 103:8-12*; *2 Corinthians 5:9, 21*;
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17; *1 Timothy 1:15*; *1 John 1:7*.

OTHER RESOURCES, READINGS AND PRAYERS FOR WORSHIP

Prayers of Approach

Our Father, to whom belongs our adoration and praise, we ask that you will prepare us, through the presence of your Spirit, to come before you worthily and to ask of you rightly. May all who worship with us this day present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to you. Shed your light on our human understanding, cleanse our desires and motives, stir our wills to obedience to your Word. Direct that your name might be exalted this hour in this assembly. May our worship glorify you, through Jesus Christ our lord. Amen.⁷

Gentle ... yet powerful. Lowly ... yet almighty.
Shepherd ... yet King.

In Your gentleness, guide us.

In Your power, strengthen us.

In Your lowliness, strip from us our selfish pride which only destroys us.

In Your greatness, lift us up that we might aspire to greater things.

As a shepherd, call us to be Your servants.

As a King, call us to be Your royal priesthood.

O God, who is our shepherd and our King;

O Christ, who was crucified and is now risen from the dead;

O Spirit, who comforts and empowers;

O great One in Three, Holy Trinity, this hour, set us free to worship. Amen.⁸

Offertory Sentences and Prayers

Scriptures make it clear that everything belongs to the Lord, including our finances. The offering is an expression of our stewardship, an acknowledgment of what God has entrusted to us. It is also an act of worship, declaring our utmost dependence on the One who gives us what we need and have. Through the act of an offering, we give glory to God. We also express heart-felt gratitude for God's goodness and blessing, while acknowledging our willingness and joy in sharing responsibility toward the dynamic work of the Reign of God on earth. The act of an offering is both an illustration of the wisdom of generosity and a discipline of the spiritual life. An invitation for such an act should be framed in its proper scriptural and theological context.

Biblical calls to financial giving

"O nations of the world, recognize the Lord,
recognize that the Lord is glorious and strong.
Give to the Lord the glory he deserves!
Bring your offering and come into his presence.
Worship the Lord in all his holy splendor."

1 Chronicles 16:28-29

"They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the LORD. ... The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD."

1 Chronicles 29:8a, 9a

"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it.
The world and all its people belong to him."

Psalms 24:1

"Let all that I am praise the LORD;
with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
Let all that I am praise the LORD;
may I never forget the good things he does for me."

Psalms 103:1-2

"What can I offer the LORD
for all he has done for me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and praise the LORD'S name for saving me.
I will keep my promises to the LORD
in the presence of all his people."

Psalms 116:12-14

Continued on following page...

“Honor the LORD with your wealth
and with the best part of everything you produce.”

Proverbs 3:9

“‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!’”

Malachi 3:10

“They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

Matthew 2:11

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.”

Matthew 6:19-21

“What do you benefit if you gain the whole world
but lose your own soul?”

Mark 8:36

“You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus:
‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Acts 20:35b

“In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.”

Romans 12:6-8

“Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful.”

1 Corinthians 4:2

“Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God’s people. On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned.”

1 Corinthians 16:1a, 2a

Continued on following page...

“They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for God’s holy people. They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.”

2 Corinthians 8:2–5

“You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.”

2 Corinthians 8:9

“Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully. And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.”

2 Corinthians 9:6–8

“God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.”

2 Corinthians 9:10–12

“Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don’t forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.”

Hebrews 13:15–16

“So don’t be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.”

James 1:16–17

“If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.”

1 John 3:17–18

Continued on following page...

Offertory Prayers

Our generous God, by this act of worship we are discovering that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Graciously receive these offerings we bring, and grant to us an increased discovery of the blessedness of giving, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, we affirm you as the divine owner of all things. We acknowledge with appreciation the sacred trust you have placed in our care. We present to you now the fruits of our labours and the blessings of your providence. Accept us with our gifts, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Receive these our offerings which are given for the building up of your church, and the extension of your kingdom. We offer them to you with gratitude in our hearts and in the spirit of love and worship through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Every good gift comes from you, our Father. Out of your abundance we have experienced spiritual and material blessings beyond measure. Out of that same abundance we offer back to you these expressions of our gratitude. Receive them in the name of Jesus Christ, and use them to bring him glory. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, though you were rich, yet for our sakes you became poor, so that through your poverty we might become rich. Accept these offerings, we pray, as an expression of our gratitude for all you have done, and as an attempt on our part to follow your loving example. Amen.

Our Father, the example of the Corinthian Christians was that they first gave of themselves, and then of their substance. It is with a deep desire to do the same, that we present ourselves, and these our gifts, in the name of Jesus Christ. Receive our worship, and extend your kingdom we pray. Amen.

Great Giver of Life, you who spared not your own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and who, with him has freely given us all things; receive these offerings which we bring and dedicate to you. Enable us daily to follow your self-giving example and thereby find our deepest joy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Spirit of God, as you bear witness to the presentation of these our offerings, we pray that you would take these material gifts and make them sacred offerings to the Living God. In addition, we pray that you would enter into, and take possession of our own lives, that we might give them, and live them as daily offerings to Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Invitations to Prayer

Invitations to prayer may be offered either by scriptural reading or by a brief reflective image related to the direction or focus of the prayer. Images that draw people into an attitude of prayer help to prepare participants both for speaking and listening. Worship leaders assume the responsibility of inviting others to a place of safety and acceptance, permitting the grace of vulnerability in God's presence.

"You will search again for the LORD your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him."

Deuteronomy 4:29

"Exult in his holy name;
rejoice, you who worship the LORD.
Search for the LORD and for his strength;
continually seek him."

1 Chronicles 16:10-11

"O my people, trust in him at all times.
Pour out your heart to him,
for God is our refuge."

Psalms 62:8

"Seek the LORD while you can find him.
Call on him while he is near."

Isaiah 55:6

"In those days when you pray, I will listen.
If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me."

Jeremiah 29:12-13

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
you may ask for anything you want and it will be granted."

John 15:7

"Don't worry about anything; Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:6,7

Additional scripture resources: *Matthew 21:22; Matthew 26:41; Luke 18:1; John 14:12-14; John 16:24; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 10:19-22; James 4:8, 10; James 5:13; 1 John 5:14.*

The Pastoral Prayer

The intent of the pastoral prayer ought to be the voicing of the needs of the people. The one who prays pastorally will seek to present to God such needs as forgiveness, cleansing, comfort, guidance, help, healing, hope, faith, courage and strength. Previous planning and thought ought to be undertaken, with specific sensitivity to the people represented before God.

The pastoral prayer need not be and should not be long. One need only to recognize the difficulty of sustained attention in private prayer to appreciate the difficulty of attention in the mind of the worshipper. Simple words and simple sentence structure are most effective.

As well as the pastoral prayer speaking for the people, it models the discipline of prayer. Care should always be taken in expressing a variety of formats and styles, respecting the range of personality and temperament of the participants. A leader should never assume that everyone speaks and imagines their relationship with God in the same way. Expression of emotion, use of images, physical gestures and periods of silence are all appropriate means of communication. Praying a scripture passage may also enhance the prayer experience of the congregation.

The Lord's Prayer: A Traditional Version

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: A Contemporary Version

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
 now and for ever. Amen.⁹

Prayers for Illumination before Reading or Preaching the Word

“May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”

Psalms 19:14

Eternal God, we understand that the purpose of your word
is to be a lamp to guide our feet and a light for our path.

Psalms 119:105

As we hear it read and proclaimed, give us grace to perceive your truth, willingness to walk in its light, and the power of your Holy Spirit to seek its fulfillment to the glory of Jesus Christ. Amen.

“The instructions of the LORD are perfect,
reviving the soul.
The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The commandments of the LORD are right,
bringing joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are clear,
giving insight for living.”

Psalms 19:7-8

May that very purpose be fulfilled in these moments of devotion to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“The rain and snow come down from the heavens
and stay on the ground to water the earth.
They cause the grain to grow,
producing seed for the farmer
and bread for the hungry.”

Isaiah 55:10

Gracious God, let your word accomplish its purpose in our lives, bringing spiritual prosperity, fruitfulness, and eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Good Lord, may the truth of your word, the power of your spirit, and the full assurance of your love, minister to us in this hour. Amen.

Words of Commission

These words may often substitute for, or be used just preceding the prayer of Benediction. The Commission is understood as a brief spiritual address, or charge, and should therefore be directed to the congregation as they stand facing the ministry leader just prior to leaving the worship service. A brief word may be offered as a “charge” to the congregation, connecting the worship theme or sermon focus with the act of going out. The commissioning assists the worshippers in understanding both the call and the joy of presenting Christ to the world through the act of living devotion.

“So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us.”

2 Corinthians 5:20a

Go into all the world on behalf of Christ and challenge its people to be reconciled to God.

As you leave this place of worship to enter again the responsibilities of life, “live peacefully with each other. ... Warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:13b-18

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

“Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Matthew 5:16

“Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.”

1 Corinthians 16:13, 14

“Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

Continued on following page...

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. ... With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer ... for the sake of the Good News.”

2 Timothy 1:7-8

Go into the world as God’s distinctive people. Love in all sincerity, serve the Lord with persistent energy; stand firm in time of trouble, persist in prayer and practice hospitality. Contribute to the needs of God’s people, offer blessings upon those who persecute you and care as much about each other as you do about yourselves. And may God’s Spirit grant you the power to fulfill this commission to the glory of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Take the Light of the World to those who walk in darkness, take the Bread of Life to those who experience a famine of the word, and take the Water of Life, even Jesus Christ, to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. And may your efforts be blessed with the love, power and grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2

And may the grace of Jesus Christ himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit enable you to fulfill this commission to the glory of God. Amen.

Prayers of Benediction

“May the LORD bless you
and protect you.
May the LORD smile on you
and be gracious to you.
May the LORD show you his favor
and give you his peace.”

Numbers 6:24-26

“May God give us the desire to do his will in everything and to obey all the commands, decrees, and regulations that he gave our ancestors. ... Then people all over the earth will know that the LORD alone is God and there is no other.”

1 Kings 8:58, 60

“And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.”

Acts 20:32

“May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 15:5-6

“I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:13

“May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.”

1 Corinthians 1:3

“Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love. ... May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.”

1 Corinthians 16:13-14, 23

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

2 Corinthians 13:14

“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21

Continued on following page...

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:7

“God ... will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.”

2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17

“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all.”

2 Thessalonians 3:16

“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

2 Thessalonians 3:18

“All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen”

1 Timothy 1:17

“Now may the God of peace—
 who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,
 and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—
may he equip you with all you need
 for doing his will.
May he produce in you,
 through the power of Jesus Christ,
every good thing that is pleasing to him.
 All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.”

Hebrews 13:20–21

“In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.”

1 Peter 5:10

Continued on following page...

“Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.”

Jude 24-25

May the Lord bless and watch over you, may the Lord be pleased with you, and allow you to share in his pleasure, may the Lord be your friend and the source of your well being. Amen.

May Christ’s grace attend you, may God’s love surround you, and may the Holy Spirit keep you. Amen.

Additional scripture resources: *Psalm 72:18, 19; Psalm 129:8; Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11, 14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:23, 24; Philippians 4:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 28; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 4:22; 1 Peter 5:14; 2 Peter 3:17, 18; Revelation 1:5, 6; Revelation 22:21.*

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH

The Apostles' Creed: A Traditional Version

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of Sin; The Resurrection of the body; And the Life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed: A Contemporary Version

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.¹⁰

The Nicene Creed: A Traditional Version

I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made human, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life of the world to come. Amen.

The Nicene Creed: A Contemporary Version

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and
apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness
of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.¹¹

An Affirmation from the Pastoral Epistles

We believe in one God, the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, who no one has ever seen or can see, who gives life to all things, who is the Saviour of all. We believe in Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and humankind, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, who is to judge the living and the dead.

He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. We believe in the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, who God poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by grace, and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

To the King of Ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Affirmations Made by Jesus Christ about His Own Person and Works

(From the Gospel of John)

- I am the Bread of Life: whoever eats of this bread will live forever.
- I am the Light of the World: whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.
- I am the Door of the Sheep: If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.
- I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
- I am the Resurrection and the Life: those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.
- I am the True Vine: You are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me, you can do nothing.
- I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life: No one comes to the Father except through me.

An Affirmation of Jesus' Resurrection

"Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all ... I also saw him."

1 Corinthians 15:3b-8

An Affirmation of Resurrection Faith

"But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

'Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?'

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable.

Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless."

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

An Affirmation of God's Love

"We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. ...

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? ...

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ...

No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

from Romans 8:28-39

A Church Covenant

Having been led by the Spirit to profess our faith in Jesus Christ, and having been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now solemnly and joyfully affirm our covenant with God and with each other.

We pledge to serve Christ in the fellowship of this church. We shall endeavour to love one another, to remember one another in prayer, to share each other's joys, and to sustain each other in times of distress. We intend to be a community of faith, where those without Christ may find him, and where all who come may find welcome. We shall strive to be responsible community members, through faithful attendance, unselfish use of our gifts and generous giving.

We shall seek to be a community of character, obedient to Christ in our daily living. Within our homes, in our work, and while at leisure, we shall pursue attitudes and actions which will reflect God's Spirit working through us. Believing that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, we will live in such a way that honours the Spirit.

Drawn together in a fellowship of faith with all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we will pray and work for a spirit of unity among all Christians. Believing that our call to be a church is a call to witness in the world, we dedicate ourselves anew as servants of the Lord of all life. We pledge ourselves to the practice of justice and kindness and a daily walk with God. As we promise our support to the work of our missionaries throughout the world, we commit ourselves to the mission to which God calls us all.

Acknowledging our humanity and depending wholly upon the grace of Jesus Christ, we commit our lives to God in all God's fullness; the Holy Spirit, who is our Teacher and guide, the Son, Jesus Christ, who is redeeming us as a people, and the Father who is Maker of Heaven and Earth. Amen.

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

Most congregations have an established policy or tradition regarding the frequency and conduct of the Communion Service. The ministry leader should be sensitive to familiar practice, but at the same time ought to explore a variety of ways of keeping the celebration of the Lord's Supper fresh and meaningful.

The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of Christ's actions on our behalf; it is a reminder of God's promises and covenant through Christ; it gathers us as a family of believers, uniting us in our Saviour; it reassures us of what is to come, the promise of Christ's return and eternity in his perfect presence. The Lord's supper is a declaration and confirmation of one's faith as well as belonging to a wider body. Finally, the Lord's Supper offers a certain element of mystery where those who participate, in faith, may experience Christ's gracious presence in their lives. The ministry leader along with elected congregational leaders and/or other appropriately designated people should carefully work out a plan for the preparation and serving of the elements. This plan should be interpreted clearly to the servers, so that the service may proceed smoothly and without awkwardness.

The Lord's Supper may serve not only as a celebration by believers, but also as a witness of faith to non-believers. The ministry leader should clearly and graciously make this distinction in extending an invitation to the Lord's Table for both those who participate and those who observe.

The service should be conducted quietly, naturally and with dignity; the ministry leader should model a relaxed and reverent attitude. It is a service of communion, of remembrance, of personal faith and of proclamation. To aid the worshippers' meditations on the mysteries of this ordinance, given to us by Christ, silence, quiet music or appropriate readings may accompany the serving of the elements.

The Order of Service

The order below is structured to follow immediately after the sermon in a service of public worship. If it is used alone as a separate service, it should be introduced by an appropriate Call to Worship and Invocation.

Immediately after the sermon, the ministry leader may extend the invitation to the Lord's Supper with an explanation of the congregation's policy as to who is invited/permitted to partake of the elements. This should be phrased with graciousness and sensitivity.

During the singing of the Communion Hymn, the ministry leader and those assigned to serve take their places at the table, and any desired or necessary change of position of choir or members of the congregation is quietly made. When those assigned to the table have taken their places, two of them remove the covering cloth or plate covers.

This is an appropriate moment for the ministry leader and/or elected congregational leaders to extend the right hand of fellowship to new members, and welcome them into the church.

The ministry leader then calls and invites the congregation to the Lord's Supper. (Wording is suggested in the order that follows.) At this point, one of those assigned to serve (who has been contacted in advance) may be asked to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the Supper, incorporating thanks for both the bread and the cup and the spiritual realities that they symbolize. This one prayer may take the place of the two separate prayers for the bread and the cup.

The ministry leader then says the Words of Institution for the Bread and breaks it. (If separate Prayers of Thanksgiving for Bread and Cup are being offered, the Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Bread is offered here.)

The ministry leader then gives the bread to those assigned to serve to distribute to the people. After all have been served, they eat together when the ministry leader invites everyone to do so.

After a moment of silence, the same sequence is repeated for the cup.

In some places, communion by intinction is becoming an accepted practice. In this case, following the Words of Institution and Prayer of Thanksgiving for both bread and cup, servers take their places. One server holds a common cup. Another holds a tray with a loaf of bread or pieces of bread prepared. The congregation is invited to approach the servers, take a piece of bread, dip it into the cup, and partake of communion before returning to their seat. As the elements are taken the servers may say to each person "The body of Christ, broken for you," or "The blood of Christ, shed for you," or other wording that may be agreed upon.

An appropriate Communion Hymn, followed by a Benediction, ends the service.

The Communion Offering

In some congregations it is customary to receive a communion offering, generally for benevolent uses within the church or community, or for world relief (such as through Canadian Baptist Ministries). This offering may be received either before or after the Lord's Supper. If it is received after Communion, it may be appropriate for a couple of designated congregational leaders to stand at the exit to the sanctuary and receive the offering as people leave. The use of Communion offering envelopes may encourage people to support this ministry more generously.

An Order for the Celebration of Communion

Explanation of Congregational Policy

A Communion Hymn

The Reception of New Members

The Communion Offering (Optional)

Galatians 6:2 says, “Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.” It is a custom at Communion to receive an offering for those of our [fellowship/community/world] who may be in need. Let us honour the scriptures, as we [share one another’s burdens/love our neighbour as ourselves].

The Call to the Supper

[One of the following may be used:]

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who have love and concern for your neighbours, who intend to lead a new life, following the commandment of God by walking in holy ways: draw near with reverence, faith and thanksgiving and take the Supper of the Lord to your comfort.

Come to this sacred table, not because you must, but because you may: come to testify not that you are righteous, but that you sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ and desire to be his true disciples. Come, not because you have any claim on heaven’s rewards, but because in your frailty and sin you stand in constant need of heaven’s mercy and help; come not to express an opinion, but to seek a Presence and to pray for a Spirit.

And now that the Supper of the Lord is spread before you, lift your minds and hearts above all selfish fears and care. Let this bread and this cup be to you the witness and signs of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Before the throne of the heavenly Father and the cross of the Redeemer make your humble confession of sin, dedicate your lives to Christian obedience and service, and pray for strength to know and do the holy will of God.

Invitation

We have come together today, in obedience to our Lord’s command, to share the Lord’s Supper. To its blessing and fellowship, all disciples of the Lord Jesus, who have confessed him before people and wish to serve him, may come. This is not our table, but the Table of our Lord.

Alternate: We invite all who love the Lord Jesus, who have repented of sin and who have decided to follow Christ in newness of life to come to this Table. It is the Table of the Lord.

Continued on following page...

The Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Supper (Optional)

[This prayer is intended for both bread and cup, unless the prayers are offered separately as indicated below.]

The Words of Institution for the Bread

[While breaking the bread:]

“On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’”

1 Corinthians 11:23–24

The Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Bread

[If not offered previously.]

Let us also give thanks. _____ will offer thanksgiving for the bread.

The Serving of the Bread

[When all have been served:]

Let us eat this bread in remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice for us.

Silence***The Words of Institution for the Cup***

[While lifting the cup:]

“In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.’ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord’s death until he comes again.”

1 Corinthians 11:25–26

The Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Cup

[If not offered previously.]

Let us again give thanks. _____ will offer thanksgiving for the cup.

The Serving of the Cup

[When all have been served:]

“Jesus said, “This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.”

Matthew 26:28

Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

Continued on following page...

Silence**Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution (Alternative)**

[This option, modelled on the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (c.215), includes both the Words of Institution and Prayers of Thanksgiving, and is offered as an alternative to the Words and Prayers described above.]

Ministry Leader: We give you thanks and praise, almighty God, through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. He is your living Word, through whom you have created all things. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh of the Virgin Mary and shared our human nature. He lived and died as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. In fulfillment of your will he stretched out his hands in suffering, to bring release to those who place their hope in you; and so he won for you a holy people. He chose to bear our griefs and sorrows, and to give up his life on the cross, that he might shatter the chains of evil and death and banish the darkness of sin and despair. By his resurrection he brings us into the light of your presence. Now with all creation we raise our voices to proclaim the glory of your name.

All: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Ministry Leader: Holy and gracious God, accept our praise, through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on the night he was handed over to suffering and death, took bread and gave you thanks, saying, "Take, and eat: this is my body which is broken for you."

In the same way he took the cup, saying, "This is my blood which is shed for you. When you do this, you do it in memory of me."

Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection, we offer you this bread and this cup, giving thanks that you have made us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you.

We ask you to send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church. Gather into one all who share in these sacred mysteries, filling them with the Holy Spirit and confirming their faith in the truth, that together we may praise you and give you glory through your Servant, Jesus Christ.

All glory and honour are yours, Father and Son, with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church, now and for ever. Amen.¹²

Continued on following page...

[The Bread and Cup are served.]

A Communion Hymn

[To introduce the hymn:]

“They sang a hymn and went out”

Mark 14:26

The Benediction

And so, into God’s gracious keeping we would commit each other. May the Lord shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord give us peace; in our going out, and in our coming in; in our lying down and in our rising up; in our labour and in our leisure; in our laughter and in our tears; until we come to stand before our maker in that day in which there is no sunset and no dawn; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Alternate Benediction:

Go out into the world living for Jesus. Where there is darkness, take his light. Where there is despair, take his love. Where there is death, take his life. And know this: the Lord is with you as you live for him. Amen.

Celebrating Communion in a Private Setting

As part of the ministry of care, from time-to-time it may be appropriate to celebrate Communion, or the Lord's Supper, with one who is unable to attend public worship. Because the celebration of Communion is intended to be expressive of the Body of Christ, it is desirable to have one or two representatives of the congregation present to participate, in addition to the care-giver. The procedure should be undertaken with sensitivity to physical and other limitations of the patient or shut-in and to the regulations governing visitation in an institutional setting. Travelling communion sets are available in most Christian supply houses.

An Order for the Celebration of Communion in a Private Setting

Preparing the Elements and Instruction

Welcome and Opening Statement

Sisters and brothers in Christ, be welcome in the presence of the Spirit of God. We have gathered together to observe the ordinance of Communion, in fellowship with one another and in obedience to Christ's command. Although we are small in number, we have everything here that we need, including assurance of Christ's own presence, for as he said, "Where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them."

Matthew 18:20

We are the children of God and we are joined together here on holy ground. Let us therefore draw near with trust and thanksgiving, and partake of bread and cup together, for the nourishment of our souls. Let us pray ...

Prayer

Most Merciful God, we bow before you in our hearts, conscious of our dependence upon you and of our confidence in your grace. Forgive us our sins, we pray, cleanse us and make us new, for the sake of Christ. Grant that in this time together we might discover afresh how precious is the hope to which we have been called. Grant also that we might delight in your will and walk in your ways, now and always. Amen.

Continued on following page...

Words of Institution

“On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’” In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.’ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord’s death until he comes again.”

1 Corinthians 11:23b–26

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks for the Bread and the Cup.

Distribution and Partaking of the Bread

[As the bread is distributed:]

The Body of Christ, broken for you.

Distribution and Partaking of the Cup

[As the cup is distributed:]

The Blood of Christ, shed for you.

Words of Benediction

“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20–21

Passing of the Peace

Ministry Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

PART IV

Resources for
**SPECIAL OCCASIONS
IN CONGREGATIONAL LIFE**

THE RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

New members are most commonly received at the time of the Communion Service, but may appropriately be received at any worship service. The ceremony for the reception of new members is the public extension of welcome and the rights of fellowship to those who have been received into membership by action of the congregation.

Several appropriate Scripture Readings are suggested in the order that follows.

Additional scripture resources: *Psalms 116:12-14; Matthew 10:32; John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42; Romans 12:9-13; Galatians 6:2, 6, 9, 10; Ephesians 5:25-27.*

It can be very meaningful for the ministry leader or an elected congregational leader to offer to each new member a symbol of welcome at the end of the service. This may be a warm embrace, a handshake, a membership certificate, a flower – or any other symbol of greeting and welcome.

The ministry leader or elected congregational leader may also add some personal word of counsel or encouragement as part of the ceremony.

An Order for the Acceptance of New Members

Scripture Reading

“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you.”

Romans 12:4–6

“The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! ... Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.”

Galatians 5:22–25

“Therefore I ... beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.”

Ephesians 4:1–6

“Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”

Hebrews 10:23–25

Introduction of New Members

[If on a Communion Sunday.]

This is the day we rejoice in the unity of Christ as his family around the table. Thus it is appropriate to welcome into our fellowship the following persons:

Brief introduction of each new member.

Continued on following page...

Address to New Members

Our friends in the Christian faith, this congregation is a family of believers in Jesus Christ, bound together by a common experience of the work of God in our lives. _____, we have witnessed the evidence of this work in you, making you one with us in a common faith and loyalty. Now, we rejoice to welcome you into this community of faith, and we invite you to participate fully in our worship and mission.

In the life of this congregation we commit to pray for, support, encourage and help one another, so that we may all grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As a member of this congregation, you will be part of a larger fellowship of Canadian Baptists, a fellowship that goes out in widening circles of association until it reaches the Baptist World Alliance. As Christians you are members of the still wider body of Christ in the world. We pray that the Spirit of God will make you increasingly aware of the dignity, the privilege and the responsibilities of membership in both this fellowship of believers and in the universal Church of Jesus Christ.

Alternate Address:

Because of your faith you are already one with the redeemed people of God. We are pleased and blessed by your expressed desire to unite with us in the fellowship of this congregation. We affirm that God has brought you to this place as you join with us in the work to which we have been called.

By joining with this congregation you become one with us in mission and ministry. We urge you to develop your spiritual gifts, engage in appropriate areas of service, maintain your practice of worship and study, and help provide for the needs of our congregation. We ask you to encourage our leaders and, by your own life and example, bring enrichment to the life we share together.

Address to Congregation

As we receive these people into our fellowship we are entering into a joyous covenant with them. May they always find this congregation to be a community of spiritual enrichment, encouragement, and refuge. May they find us always prepared to receive them as part of the family, willing to celebrate their joys and open to share with them the deepest needs of life.

As a sign of your willingness to commit yourself to them, would you please stand and join in a prayer of dedication?

Continued on following page...

Prayer of Dedication

Eternal God, our Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for these people whom you have added to our fellowship today. We thank you for the faith of your Son Jesus Christ which binds us together. We thank you for the work of the Holy Spirit who has brought us together in unity this day.

We pray that you would enable us to be faithful members of your Church, committed to worship and ministry, spiritual growth and mission together. May we all use our gifts for the welfare of others, and the well-being of this congregation. In the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Presentation of the Symbol of Fellowship

In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of this congregation, I welcome you into membership. May God bless and enrich you as you share in the life and ministry of God's people in this place.

THE DEDICATION AND COMMISSIONING OF LEADERS AND TEACHERS

Responsibility and leadership are both a Christian duty and a holy calling. It is important for us to recognize that each individual has specific gifts, a unique personality and blend of talents, and that the congregation benefits from the expression of those gifts.

The purpose of a service of dedication and commissioning is threefold:

- To present publicly a particular set of tasks and responsibilities and to introduce those persons who have been elected or appointed to use their gifts in the fulfillment of those responsibilities;
- To give leaders the opportunity of publicly affirming their intention to commit themselves and their resources to undertaking their task;
- To provide an opportunity for the congregation to commission these leaders to their specific areas of mission and ministry.

A Dedication and Commissioning Service

The service begins with the presentation of the leaders and an indication of the position to which they are called. The individuals come to the front of the sanctuary.

The Scripture reading should reflect the task for which the people are being set aside. Appropriate scripture resources:

- For general use: *Matthew 9:35-38; 20:26-28; 28:1-20; Romans 12:1, 2, 6, 11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27; 13; Ephesians 4:1-13; 1 Peter 5:2-4*
- For congregational leaders: *Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-7*
- For teachers: *Mark 1:21-22; 2 Timothy 2:15*
- For musicians: *Psalms 96:1-10; 98:4-6; Colossians 3:16-17*
- For youth workers: *Proverbs 3:5-6; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Timothy 4:11-16*
- For outreach workers: *Matthew 28:18, 20; Acts 13:1-3; Romans 10:14-15*
- For congregational care teams: *1 Corinthians 16:15-18; Acts 16:6-9; 1 Peter 4:8-11; 1 John 4:7-12*
- For community leaders: *2 Timothy 1:8-12; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Micah 6:8*

An Order of Service for the Dedication and Commissioning of Leaders and Teachers

Introduction and Presentation of Leaders

Scripture Reading

Commissioning of Leaders

In all ages God has called men and women of faith to step out and assume positions of special responsibility in the church and in the world. _____ [task or tasks] is one of those responsibilities. It is as great a task as any we can offer.

To you I extend the words of Christ himself, who said, “You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit.”

John 15:16a

Similarly, I issue to you the charge of the Apostle Paul:

“Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15

You have the privilege of sharing in God’s work. It is important that you be conscious of the tools at your disposal, the resources of wisdom and power which God provides and the congregation which offers its support. I remind you of the importance of scripture and prayer. These are the key to your Christian life and to the task you now undertake. Never forget that the ministry in which you share is vital and the lives it will touch are precious in the sight of God.

With the assurance of God’s presence and the support of this congregation, I commission you to the task of _____. The words Paul gave to the Corinthians, I now give to you:

“Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.”

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Continued on following page...

Responsive Statement of Intent

Ministry Leader: Do you now accept your task as a sacred and solemn trust from the Lord Jesus Christ, and do you promise to fulfill your responsibilities and ministries to the best of your ability?

Leaders/Teachers: [I/We] do, with the Lord's help.

Ministry Leader: Will you seek to be a faithful example of new life in Jesus Christ, and to make the witness of his church more effective in the world?

Leaders/Teachers: [I/We] will, with the Lord's help.

Congregational Response

[Turning to the congregation.]

Ministry Leader: Do you, the members of the congregation, acknowledge and receive these leaders, and promise to enter with them into the spirit of the vows they have just made to God? Do you promise to encourage them, support them, labour with them and pray for them, with God as your helper? If so, will you stand with them for a prayer of dedication?

Laying On of Hands (Optional)**Prayer of Dedication**

Our Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, we approach you as a people whom you have called, gifted and commissioned. You have invited us to share in the task of reaching the world with the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. We thank you that you have chosen to do so by bringing us together into one body, the Church.

We thank you especially for [this person/these people] who [has/have] answered the call to specific service in the life and ministry of our congregation. We present ourselves, and [him/her/them] to you in a renewed commitment of our lives and our abilities. May the wisdom of your Word, the power of your Spirit, and your unending love fill us, that we might know your will and be empowered to do it to the glory of Jesus Christ and his Church. Amen.

[The Lord's Prayer may be said here.]

THE COMMISSIONING OF A PASTOR

There is considerable variation in local custom when a minister is called and commissioned. In some instances, a representative from the particular Region or Association will be responsible for initiating and planning the service; in other cases, the congregation itself is responsible for making such plans.

The service should be arranged and conducted as soon as possible following the arrival of the new pastor. The commissioning of a pastor should not only be an event in the life of the congregation, but also in the life of the community, and the Region or Association. Appropriate notices and invitations should be circulated in sufficient time to provide adequate information and enough time for response.

The date and time for the service will be dictated largely by local custom and the availability of the participants. In most cases, a reception will be planned to follow the service.

The Commissioning Service

The balance of the service should be shaped according to local custom but should include, as a minimum, readings from the scriptures, the introduction of the new pastor, an exchange of commitments, an act of commissioning, a commissioning prayer, and a blessing given by the newly commissioned pastor.

Additional scripture resources: *Isaiah 6:1-8; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; 12:35-48; John 10:1-18; Romans 10:6-17; 12; 2 Corinthians 4; 5:11-21; Ephesians 4:1-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-6; 1 Peter 5:1-11.*

After the Scripture reading, the person introducing the pastor, usually a member of the congregation, will normally present a narrative of the events leading up to the call and the acceptance of the new pastor. The life of the pastor (and family, if appropriate) should also be highlighted briefly.

A variety of practices prevail in the exchange of commitments between pastor and congregation and the affirmation of the integrity of their purpose. Two options are presented in the order below.

A third option is the dialogue sermon. In this case, the pastor and representatives from the Church engage in a faith and practice dialogue concerning the convictions of the pastor and the particular areas of ministry and need in the congregation. A well-planned dialogue will enable both pastor and congregation to clearly understand the commitments which are being made to one another.

The Prayer of Commissioning following the Act of Commissioning is usually led by a representative of the Region or Association, or a pastor, while the blessing that ends the service is usually pronounced by the newly-commissioned pastor.

An Order of Service for the Commissioning of a Pastor

Scripture Reading

Introduction of the New Pastor

Exchange of Commitments

Option 1: Formal Question and Answer Period

Moderator: _____, so that your faith and full conviction may be apparent to all, will you now answer the following questions:

Are you persuaded that you are truly called to this particular ministry, according to the will of Christ and the custom of this congregation?

Pastor: I am.

Moderator: Are you motivated for ministry by a deep desire to walk with God, a love for Jesus Christ, and a passionate concern for the people of God's creation?

Pastor: I am.

Moderator: Are you committed to the mission goals of _____ Church and are you prepared to give your support to the ministries in which it is engaged?

Pastor: I am.

Moderator: Will you be faithful in caring for this congregation, in proclaiming the word of God, in discipling Christ's people, and in reaching out to the larger community?

Pastor: I will, with God's help.

Moderator: Will you pledge to live a life that models the kind of personal morality, spiritual vitality and gracious joy that will contribute to the building up of the body of Christ?

Pastor: I will, with Christ as my strength and guide.

Continued on following page...

Option 2: Pastor/Congregation Dialogue

Moderator: We are gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, the Head of the Church, to commission _____ to the ministry of _____ Church.

[Pastor stands.]

Moderator: _____, it is our belief that the calling into the Christian ministry and to particular service within it is both of God and the Church. It is inward leading and outward calling answering to each other.

Are you persuaded that you are truly called to this particular ministry, to seek to fulfill the purposes of God among the people of _____ Church?

Pastor: I am so persuaded.

Moderator: People of _____ Church, are you persuaded that _____ is the person whom God has brought at this time and into this place to be a pastor among you and a leader in your ministry? Will you please indicate your positive response by standing?

[People stand.]

Because you, _____, and you, the people of this church, are the ones who are giving yourselves to shared ministry in this congregation and community, we invite you to respond to each other.

People: We believe that you _____, are the person intended by God to be a pastor among us and a leader in our ministry. It is in this belief that we have called you to our fellowship, and it is in this belief that we now affirm our invitation to you.

Pastor: I believe that you, the congregation of _____ Church, are the people among whom I am intended by God to live, to serve as pastor and to share with in ministry. It is in this belief that I have accepted the call to your fellowship, and it is in this belief that I now affirm my acceptance of your invitation.

Continued on following page...

- People:* We ask you, _____, will you minister to us using the gifts God has entrusted to you? Will you give of yourself, by the strength and grace of Jesus Christ our Lord? Will you be sensitive to the needs and possibilities of all of our people, young and old, singly or in families, those new to our congregation and those long affiliated with it? Will you help us to grow toward Christian maturity, through your preaching and teaching, your example and counsel? Will you encourage us to love and serve one another? Will you help us to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of our community and our world? Will you enable us to be an effective part of the _____ [Association/Region] of Baptist Churches and the Canadian Baptists of _____ [Convention/Union]?
- Pastor:* To all of these questions, I affirm: "With Christ as my helper, I will try to do all of these things."
Now I ask for a pledge of your encouragement and support. Do you understand yourselves to be sharing Christ's ministry with me in the fellowship of this congregation? Will you be sensitive to my needs (and the needs of my family) and seek to minister to me as well as with me? Will you assure me of your confidence, your encouragement, your patience and your prayers? And, finally, will you commit yourselves to the tasks which will give shape and energy to our ministry in this place?
- People:* To all of these questions, we affirm: "With Christ's help, we will try to do all of these things."
We accept you, _____, as a person of Christian commitment and God-given gifts. We accept you as a Pastor among us and a leader in our ministry.
- Pastor:* I accept you, the people of this congregation, as people of Christian commitment and God-given gifts. I accept you as the people God has called me to serve and as co-workers in our ministry together.
- Moderator:* We who are here as friends and neighbours of this congregation have witnessed the promises you have made to each other. As an expression of our support, to declare our joy and confidence in your coming together, and to commit ourselves to you in the ministry we share, we rise to stand with you.
[All stand.]

Continued on following page...

Act of Commissioning

Moderator: _____, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, on behalf of the _____ [Association/Region] of Baptist Churches, and with the authority given to me by this congregation, I declare you to be the pastor of this church.

“May the Lord bless you
and protect you.

May the Lord smile on you
and be gracious to you.

May the Lord show you his favor
and give you his peace.” Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

Since no one person, or group of people, is sufficient for the commitments made today, let us call upon God in prayer.

The Commissioning Prayer

[All remain standing.]

Blessing

ORDINATION FOR GOSPEL MINISTRY

For information regarding steps to ordination and procedures for the ordination examination, please contact the office of your regional group of Canadian Baptists.

In both Old and New Testament times, some leaders were set apart as being distinctive among the people of God. It is consistent with biblical practice for a congregation to recognize that God has given gifts to God's people, and to affirm those individuals called to specific areas of ministry within the local congregation. Ordination then becomes a recognition of what God has already done in the life of an individual in choosing him or her for ministry.

In keeping with the recommended procedures for ordination examination as held by regional groups of Canadian Baptists the congregation should proceed with the Ordination Service when a report from the examining council is received.

The Ordination Service

An Ordination Service requires, as a minimum, the following elements: an introductory statement and the report of the examining council; an address by the moderator to the candidate; inquiries of the candidate and the congregation; the laying on of hands, an ordination prayer, and the presentation of a certificate of ordination.

The local congregation should feel free to structure the rest of the service according to their custom.

Appropriate scripture resources: *Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30; Joshua 1:1-9; 1 Samuel 3:4-10; Isaiah 6:1-8; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Ezekiel 2:1-3:3; Matthew 4:18-22; 28:16-20; Luke 10:20-24; 2 Corinthians 4:1-10; 5:11-21; 6:1-10; Galatians 1:15-24; Ephesians 3:7-12; 4:1-16; Colossians 1:24-29; 4:2-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 Timothy 3:1-16; 4:6-16; 6:11-21; 2 Timothy 1:6-14; 2:1-25; 3:1-17; 4:1-8; 1 Peter 5:1-11.*

For the *Laying On of Hands*, it is customary for the candidate to kneel, and for the moderator and the other appointed representatives to lay their right hands upon him or her, while the prayer of ordination is offered.

Following the *Presentation of the Certificate of Ordination*, words of personal support and blessing may be offered.

An Order for a Service of Ordination

Introductory Statement and Report of Examining Council

Moderator: We are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the request of this congregation, and as representatives of the Churches of the _____ [Association/Region] of the Canadian Baptists of _____ [Convention/ Union], in order to appoint _____ to the work of the Christian ministry. _____ is being ordained to _____ [the particular field of ministry for which the candidate is being set aside].

_____ has presented [himself/herself] to an Ordination Examining Council that was duly called and properly constituted. The examining Council heard the candidate's statement of Christian experience, call to ministry, views on Christian doctrine and [his/her] relationship to our Canadian Baptist family. After examination and prayer, the council has affirmed [his/her] call of God to _____ [field of] ministry.

We invite you to join with us in this Service of Ordination.

Scripture Reading

Moderator's Address to Candidate

_____, we have gladly heard of the grace of God in your life, and of the desire of this congregation to set you apart for the ministry of _____ [field]. We ask you to consider once more the source of your calling, so that with sincere conviction, integrity and holiness of life, and humble dependence upon God, you may fulfill that calling, remembering that our Lord Jesus Christ said: "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me."

Mark 8:34

Hear also what the Apostle Paul said: "Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. ... You should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you."

2 Timothy 4:2, 5

Hear also the counsel of the Apostle Peter: "Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example."

1 Peter 5:2-3

Continued on following page...

Inquiry of Candidate

Moderator: Do you affirm your determination to give your life to the ministry of Jesus Christ, in accordance with the principles of ministry as set forth in the Word of God?

Candidate: I will endeavour to do so, with the Lord as my helper.

Inquiry of Congregation

Moderator: Do you, the people of this fellowship, acknowledge and affirm the gifts and abilities of _____ to fulfill _____ [the specified ministry] in this congregation?

Are you prepared to appoint, or set apart, _____ to that ministry? Do you covenant to work together with [him/her], giving [him/her] all the support needed for [his/her] ministry in the Lord? Will you signify your affirmation by standing?

[Congregation stands.]

The setting apart of _____ for the ministry will take place by the laying-on of hands and a prayer of ordination. Would those invited to participate please step forward.

Laying-on of Hands and Ordination Prayer

Presentation of Certificate of Ordination

Moderator: In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, on behalf of this congregation of believers, by the authority of the examination council, and on behalf of Canadian Baptists of _____ [Convention/Union], it is my privilege to welcome you into the Christian ministry and present you with this certificate of ordination.

Words of Support and Blessing (Optional)

THE DEDICATION OF MATERIAL RESOURCES

Significant events in the physical growth of a congregation may from time to time be the focus of celebration. These usually find one of two foci. The first centres around buildings – either construction, renovation, adaptation or addition. The second concerns furnishings and elements associated primarily with worship. This may involve such things as a stained glass window, a pulpit, a communion table or set, choir garments, musical resources, Bibles, etc.

The Dedication of Physical Space

In the dedication of facilities for the gathered congregation, the focus is on the faith, dedication and labour of the people who have committed themselves and their resources to following God and erecting or renovating a building as a centre for ministry.

The service is not a dedication of walls, floor or roof. It is a dedication of these for the mission that will be carried on within them. The facilities dedication service must raise up an awareness of mission and focus on the future, not just the past. Care should be taken to engender more than just a sense of completion and the end of a journey. The dedication of facilities marks the beginning of a new phase in the congregation's life and mission.

Any celebration of facilities should take place as part of the congregation's customary pattern of worship. The ministry leader should select scriptures and music focused on the specifics of the occasion.

Ground breaking

The words of dedication in a ground-breaking ceremony should be appropriate for the community worshipping together. The following elements and themes may be included:

- Expressions of thanksgiving to God for calling together the Church community, raising up a vision to build, and providing resources to begin the work.
- Celebration of God's presence in the gathered people. It is the Spirit's presence in people that makes a church holy, not a particular plot of ground.
- Recognition of the Church's mission and the role the new building will eventually play – not just as a sanctuary of retreat, but as a centre of the Church's outreach.
- Dedication of the ground, the missionary vision and the people to God.

Appropriate scripture resources: *Genesis 28:10-22*;
1 Chronicles 22:11-16; 19; 2 Chronicles 2:1-9; Psalms 24; 29; 84;
Isaiah 12; Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

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Laying of the cornerstone

Like the ground-breaking ceremony, this may be a special service or it may follow a regular worship service.

Though the actual setting of the cornerstone may be a formality, later to be properly executed by the construction crew, it is advisable that the actual location for the cornerstone, and the stone itself be authentic. In some cases a time capsule with pertinent information about the congregation and the community can be inserted.

The cornerstone-laying ceremony should be planned for and treated as a very significant event in the life of a congregation.

Appropriate scripture resources: *Psalms 84; 118:22-24; Ezra 3:10-11; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 7:24-27; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 3:10-17; 1 Peter 2:4-6, 9-10 (Responsive)*

See the suggested *Dedication Statement for the Laying of a Cornerstone*.

The dedication of a church building

One of the most significant events in the life of any congregation is the dedication of a new church building. It is desirable, if circumstances and weather permit, prior to the service of dedication, that the congregation stand at the entrance to the church building. Upon a prearranged signal, the doors may be opened and then the service may proceed as the congregation moves from the entrance of the church into the sanctuary.

Appropriate scripture resources: *1 Kings 8; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; 15-19; 2 Chronicles 6:1, 2, 4, 14, 17-20, 29-41; Psalms 27:4, 5; 84; 100:1-5; 122:1-9; Haggai 2:1-9; 1 Corinthians 3:9-23; Ephesians 2:13-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10.*

See the suggested *Order of Service for the Dedication of a New Building*.

The burning of a mortgage

A congregation may celebrate the discharge of a mortgage by burning the document.

Appropriate scripture resources: *Psalms of thanksgiving; Luke 14:28-30; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; 1 Timothy 6:17-19.*

See the suggested *Prayer of Thanksgiving for a Mortgage Burning*.

Continued on following page...

The dedication of furnishings and equipment

Furnishings and equipment are frequently dedicated during a morning worship service. The Act of Dedication is a celebration of God's goodness to us in providing materials for our worship, mission or ministry. As such we are engaged in two tasks simultaneously. The first is an act of gratitude focused on God and on the people who shared generously in the provision of the item. The second is a pledge of faithfulness and commitment in using the materials for the purpose for which they are given.

Commonly, churches dedicate pulpits, communion tables and sets, musical instruments, choir vestments, stained glass windows and other resources used in worship and ministry.

Each congregation should be free to develop services to fit their worship style. The Resources for the Dedication of Furnishings and Equipment below can be adapted for a variety of uses. If the gift is a memorial, suitable mention of the fact may be made during the act of dedication.

Appropriate scripture resources: *Acts 2:43-47; Acts 4:32-37; 2 Corinthians 8:2-5.*

**A Dedication Statement
for the Laying of a Cornerstone**

In the faith of Jesus Christ, we place the cornerstone in this foundation. May the building erected on this site become a place for the worship of God. We lay this stone with the conviction that within these walls prayers will be offered, the gospel will be preached, Jesus' ordinances will be administered, his praises sung, and his people equipped for ministry in the world. May the Creator God bless our work of obedience in establishing this place of worship.

An Order of Service for the Dedication of a New Building

The Call to Worship

“Open up, ancient gates!
Open up, ancient doors,
and let the King of glory enter.”

Psalm 24:7

We open the doors of this church as a house of prayer and worship, a place for training and discipleship, and a centre for mission and ministry. May its doors be wide enough to receive all who need the love and care of God. May its doors shut out all envy, pride and hate. May God’s people cross this threshold and be nurtured in the Christian life, then cross back again to love and serve the world. May the doors of this house be the gateway to the Realm of God.

Scripture Reading

Presentation of the Building

Leader: We are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed the work of our hands and enabled the raising of this building as a place of worship.

I invite the Chair of the Building Committee to come and present this new building to the congregation.

Chair: On behalf of the Building Committee, the architect, the contractor, and all who have participated in the erection of this building, I now present the keys as a symbol of this entire structure, so that we may proceed to dedicate it to our Lord.

Leader: Since God has blessed his people with the resources and the vision necessary for the building of this place, let us now dedicate it to God’s honour.

Continued on following page...

Words of Dedication

Leader: Having been enabled by God's grace and power to complete the construction of this place of worship, let us dedicate it to God's purposes, aware that we are in the presence of the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[People stand.]

Leader: To the glory of God our Father, from whom comes every good and perfect gift; to the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord, from whom comes our salvation; to the praise of the Holy Spirit, from whom proceeds light and life,

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader: In grateful acknowledgment of all who love and serve this church; and in remembrance of those who have loved and served it in the past,

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader: In grateful recognition of the wisdom and art, the skill and science, which has given this building its forms of beauty and usefulness,

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader: As a sanctuary for worship, a place of ministry and centre for mission,

People: We dedicate this building.

Leader: In joyful celebration we commit ourselves to follow Christ, to be sensitive to the moving of his Spirit and to be obedient disciples, serving Almighty God so that God's reign may come on earth,

People: To that end, we dedicate this building to God.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving for a Mortgage Burning

Almighty God, you constantly uphold your people with care and support. We have experienced that care in the life of our church. We are a blessed people, and you have enabled us to give in support of this ministry. We thank you for the rich heritage of this church: for its people and its resources. We celebrate with you the completion of a dream that began many years ago when this mortgage was first incurred. Now we commit to you our greater vision for the healing and salvation of this community. May the added resources we now enjoy be used to that end. Amen.

Prayers and Readings for the Dedication of Furnishings and Equipment

Words of Presentation

This _____ is being presented to our church by [donor/donors] as a token of love and loyalty to Christ and his Church. In acknowledgment of God's mercy in Christ, which this gift symbolizes, and in thankfulness for the generosity of Christ's people, this gift is now joyfully presented to this congregation.

Words of Acceptance

This gift, so graciously and thoughtfully given, is accepted with gratitude on behalf of our congregation. It is our prayer that, through its use, many will be inspired to deeper devotion to our Lord and greater service in God's Kingdom.

Prayer of Dedication

Eternal and Almighty God, we thank you for the privilege of presenting this _____ to you. We pray that you will accept the sacrifice and the service of those who have provided this _____ to enhance our shared ministry. Accept the work of our hands and the worship of our hearts. As we receive this _____ may it be a sign of our covenant relationship with you and draw us deeper into your presence in worship. Amen.

PART V

**PROCEDURAL
RESOURCES**

RULES OF ORDER FOR THE CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

In case no other rules are adopted at the commencement of deliberations, the parliamentary rules of order commonly used in deliberative bodies are those which ought to govern churches and other religious societies in their congregational meetings. For a complete presentation of parliamentary procedures, see *Rules of Order* by Bourinot.

A brief summary can be found here: https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/oise/User-Files/File/OISE_Council_General/Bourinots_at_a_glance.pdf

The following rules of order are provided as a guide to generally accepted procedures.

Motions

- All business shall be presented by a motion, made by a member and seconded by another, and presented in writing by the mover, if so required.
- No discussion can properly be had until the motion is made, seconded, and stated by the chair, or presiding officer.
- A motion cannot be withdrawn after it has been discussed, except by the unanimous consent of the body.
- A motion having been discussed, it must be put to a vote, unless withdrawn, laid on the table, referred or postponed.
- A motion lost cannot be renewed at the same meeting, except by unanimous consent.
- A motion should contain but one distinct proposition. If it contains more, it may be divided at the request of any member.
- Not more than one question can properly be before the meeting at the same time.
- A second motion cannot be allowed to interrupt one already under debate. The only exceptions are subsidiary motions to amend, to substitute, to commit, to postpone, to lay on the table, or to adjourn.
- The subsidiary motions cannot be interrupted by any other motion, nor can any other motion be applied to them, except to amend by specifying time, place, or purpose. Subsidiary motions may not interrupt or supersede each other.
- A motion to adjourn is always in order except when a member has the floor, or when a question is being taken.

Amendments

- Amendments may be made to resolutions in three ways: by omitting, by adding, or by substituting words or sentences.
- An amendment to an amendment may be made, but is seldom necessary and should be avoided. There cannot be an amendment to the amendment to the amendment.
- No amendment should be made which essentially changes the meaning or design of the original motion; but a substitute may be offered which may change entirely the meaning of the resolution under debate.
- The amendment to the amendment (if any) must first be discussed and acted on, then the amendment, and lastly the original motion or the original motion as amended.

Continued on following page...

Speaking

- Any member desiring to speak on a question should rise and address the chair or presiding officer, confine remarks to the question, and avoid personalities and all unkind and disrespectful language.
- A speaker using improper language, introducing improper subjects, or otherwise out of order, should be called to order by the chair, and must either conform to the rules of debate governing the body or be seated.
- A member while speaking may allow others to ask questions or to make explanations; but if the floor is yielded to another, it cannot be reclaimed.
- A member is not permitted to speak more than once until all have spoken who desire to speak, nor more than twice on any question without the permission of the chair, or of the meeting.

Voting

- A question is put to vote by the chair, having first distinctly restated it. First, the affirmative, then the negative, is called. Whether the motion is carried or lost is then distinctly announced.
- Voting may be done by calling for the “ayes” and “nays,” by holding up the hand, by standing to be counted, or by ballot.
- If the vote as announced by the chair is doubted it is called again, usually by standing to be counted.
- All members should vote unless excused for reason, or unless under discipline, in which case they should take no part in the business.
- The chair or presiding officer does not usually vote, but in case of a tie vote, casts the deciding vote.
- When the vote is to be taken by ballot, the chair appoints tellers to distribute, collect and count the ballots.

Appeal

The chair or presiding officer announces the result of all votes, and decides all questions as to rules of procedure and order of debate. Any member, however, who is dissatisfied with the decisions of the chair may appeal them to the body. The chair then puts the question: “Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?” The vote of the body, whether negative or affirmative, is final. The right to appeal should not be resorted to in matters of slight importance.

Continued on following page...

Previous Questions

- The previous question shall be in the following words. “That this question be now put.” The previous question is not debatable and must be voted on at once unless a motion to adjourn be made.
- The previous question, until it is decided, shall preclude all amendments to the main question. If the previous question be resolved in the affirmative, the original question is to be put forthwith, without any amendment or debate.
- No amendment can be proposed to a motion for the previous question nor can the previous question be proposed when an amendment is under consideration. A motion for adjournment can be made to a motion for the previous question.
- If the motion for the previous question is lost, the presiding officer cannot put any question on the main motion, and it is dropped.

Note: The previous question is used to effect one of two objects:

- To prevent a decision on a question under consideration, in which case the members who propose and second it vote against the motion: and
- To prevent any amendment, and force a direct vote on the question, in which case the members who propose and second it vote for the motion.

To Lay on the Table

- Sometimes consideration of a question is deferred by a motion to lay it on the table, in which case it may be taken from the table for discussion at any time by order of the body; or it may be laid on the table until a specified time, to be taken from the table when that time arrives. If a question is merely laid on the table, it is usually considered disposed of.
- A motion to lay on the table must apply to a resolution or other papers. An abstract subject cannot be disposed of in this way.

Not Debatable

Motions for the previous question, indefinite postponement, to commit, to lay on the table and to adjourn, are not debatable. However, when these motions are modified by some conditions of time, place, or purpose, they become debatable, but only in respect to the time, place or purpose which brings them within the province of debate.

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To Reconsider

A motion to reconsider a motion previously disposed of must be made and seconded by persons who voted with the majority when the motion was disposed of. If the motion to reconsider a motion or resolution is carried, then the original motion stands just where it did before being considered, and may be discussed, adopted or rejected.

A vote to reconsider must be taken at the session at which the question or motion reconsidered was disposed of, and should be when there are as many members present as at first.

Point of Order

Any member who believes that a speaker is out of order, or that discussion is proceeding improperly, may at any time rise to a point of order. The point of order or objection must be distinctly and briefly stated, and then ruled on by the presiding officer.

Rule Suspended

A rule of order may be suspended for the time being by the unanimous vote of the body.

Adjournment

A simple motion to adjourn is always in order except when a member is speaking, or when taking a vote. It takes precedence of all other motions and is not debatable. A body may adjourn to a specified time, but if no time is mentioned the fixed or usual time of meeting is understood. If there is no fixed or usual time of meeting, then an adjournment without date is equivalent to a dissolution.

MINISTERIAL ETHICS

The statements of ethical relationships which appear below were adapted from the Minister's Council of the American Baptist Convention, U.S.A. They are submitted in this resource not because they have been authoritatively adopted by Canadian Baptist pastors, but as a legitimate and informative presentation of what one responsible body believes ought to be the ethics that prevail within the pastor–people relationship of the local church.

For ethical standards specific to individual Canadian Baptist bodies, the following should be consulted:

- For CBAC:
<https://baptist-atlantic.ca/our-convention/our-governance/governing-documents/ministry-regulations/>
- For UÉBFC:
<https://unionbaptiste.com/contact/>
- For CBOQ:
<https://baptist.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Statement-of-Ethical-Pastoral-Conduct-18-07-12.pdf>
<https://baptist.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Discipline-Protocol-revision-Oct-9-2018-.pdf>
- For CBWC:
<https://cbwc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MPM-Approved-by-Assembly-2019.pdf>

Church-to-Pastor Ethics

Acknowledging our basic loyalty to God through Christ, we pledge the following:

- We will follow approved procedures when seeking a pastor, and we will conduct all negotiations with integrity, courtesy and orderly procedure.
- We will recognize our responsibility of providing our pastor with adequate compensation, including expense funds, pension provision, suitable housing, and all possible encouragement to engage in continuing education opportunities.
- We will provide our pastor with the necessary facilities for work and respect time for study.
- We will recognize our pastor's need for physical and spiritual renewal by providing an adequate vacation period, as well as opportunities to attend helpful conferences.
- We will respect the time and talents of the pastor's family and require no more rigid standard of conduct for them than we set for ourselves.
- We will recognize the freedom of the pulpit, acknowledging our pastor's right to speak the truth of God as it is understood.
- We will seek to support the present pastor, without comparison to previous leadership.
- We will call upon our pastor for weddings, funerals and other pastoral services, and only under unusual circumstances, request our pastor to invite other ministers to share in such services.
- We will recognize the call, ordination and educational preparation of our pastor, providing support through prayer and encouragement as we are led in our task, and as our pastor participates in other enterprises of the Kingdom as part of the ministry of this church.
- We will observe these principles in relation to other members of our church staff consistent with their responsibilities.

Pastor-to-Church Ethics

Striving to be a good Minister of Jesus Christ,

- I will constantly seek to maintain a disciplined ministry in such ways as keeping hours for prayer and devotion, endeavouring to maintain wholesome family relationships, regularly engaging in educational experiences for professional growth and development and renewing myself through recreation and vacation.
- I will seek to safeguard the good name of the ministry; speak the truth in love, live honestly and avoid embarrassing debts.
- I will hold as sacred all confidences shared with me.
- I will exercise positive leadership, recognizing at all times the democratic process in administering our church program.
- I will seek to minister, rather than to be ministered to, placing service above salary and personal recognition; and the unity and welfare of the church above my own personal welfare.
- I will exercise the freedom of the pulpit responsibly and respect the freedom of the pew.
- I will seek to regard all persons with equal love and concern, and undertake to minister impartially to the needs of all.
- I will exercise confidence in those elected to share leadership responsibility with me, and will assist in the training of such leaders.
- I will remain open to constructive criticism and be receptive to suggestions intended to strengthen our common ministry.
- I will seek to lead the church to accept its full responsibility for community and world service.
- I will seek to build the church without discrediting other churches, soliciting members therefrom, or casting reflection on other ministers.
- I will not knowingly compete with another pastor for a call to a pastorate.
- I will, with my resignation, sever my pastoral relations with my former parishioners, and will not make pastoral contact in the field of my successors without their knowledge and consent.
- I will not use my influence to alienate the church, or any portion thereof from its denominational loyalty and support. If my convictions change from those commonly held by our denomination, I will be honourable enough to withdraw.

NOTES

- ¹ Terry C. Falla, “Good news for celebration,” in *Be Our Freedom, Lord: Responsive Prayers and Readings For Contemporary Worship*, ed. Terry C. Falla (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 23.
- ² Third Millenium Ministries, <https://thirdmill.org/files/english/html/worship/calls.contemp.html> (accessed August 26, 2019).
- ³ Carol Penner, “Upright Call to Worship,” © 2017 by Carol Penner, *leadinginworship* (website), <https://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship/prayers-call-to-worship/> (accessed August 26, 2019).
- ⁴ Carol Penner, “Tasty Call to Worship,” © 2017 by Carol Penner, *leadinginworship* (website) <https://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship/prayers-call-to-worship/> (accessed August 26, 2019).
- ⁵ Rev. Ken Carter, “Earth Day Prayer of Confession,” © 2005 by Ken Carter, *Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church* (website) <https://www.ngumc.org/files/fileslibrary/prayercalendar/april%2009%20prayercalendar.pdf> (Accessed August 26, 2019).
- ⁶ ACIP-FWM Joint Working Group on Worship 2001–2004, “Prayers for Healing and Reconciliation,” in *Worship in the Vision of New Agape – A Collection of Resources*, 24, The Anglican Church of Canada (website), <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/Worship-in-the-Vision-of-New-Agape-2004.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2019).
- ⁷ Paul E. Engle, *Baker’s Worship Handbook: Traditional and Contemporary Service Resources*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998).
- ⁸ Rev. Linda Smallwood, “Opening Prayers / Calls to Worship,” <http://www.myredeemerlives.com/prayers.html> (accessed August 26, 2019)
- ⁹ English translation of The Lord’s Prayer © 1988 English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC). www.englishtexts.org. Used by permission. <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/a42fbdb2/files/uploaded/praying.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2019).
- ¹⁰ English translation of The Apostles’ Creed © 1988 English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC). www.englishtexts.org. Used by permission. <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/a42fbdb2/files/uploaded/praying.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2019).
- ¹¹ English translation of The Nicene Creed © 1988 English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC). www.englishtexts.org. Used by permission. <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/a42fbdb2/files/uploaded/praying.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2019).
- ¹² General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, *Book of Alternative Services*, “Eucharistic Prayer 2” (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985) 196. Used by permission.