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Final Proposed Revision (FPR)
of the OPC *Directory for the Public Worship of God*

as amended by the 74th, 75th & 76th General Assemblies,

OUTLINE

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PREFACE

55 The purpose of this *Directory* is to express the Church’s common understanding of the principles and practice of
 56 public worship that is reformed according to the Scriptures and, subordinately, to the Confession and Catechisms.
 57 Where practices are understood by the Church to be required by the Word of God, either expressly or by good and
 58 necessary consequence, they are mandated. In matters of circumstance and form in worship not specifically provided
 59 for in Scripture, the *Directory* provides guidance for their ordering according to the light of nature and Christian
 60 prudence, consonant with the general rules of the Word.

61
 62 The *Directory* seeks to make clear this distinction in its use of language. The following denotations used in the
 63 *Directory* are to be understood as indicated. The first category denotes practices that are required by the Word of
 64 God.

65 1) Practices that are mandated are denoted by “shall,” “will,” “is to be,” “must,” and “are to be.”

66
 67 The following three categories denote practices that are not mandated:

68 2) Practices that are strongly recommended are denoted by “should,” “ought to,” “is desirable,” and “is
 69 advisable.”

70 3) Practices that are commended as suitable are denoted by “is appropriate,” “is well,” and “is fitting.”

71 4) Practices that are permissible are denoted by “may.”

72
 73 Other imperative forms occur in the *Directory*, and sometimes the forms in the list above are varied by modifying
 74 words or are put in the negative, either of which alters their force. For example, “may not” and “may only” are
 75 mandatory prohibitions, even though “may” is permissive. The meaning of these additional and altered forms is to
 76 be determined by the rules of English usage, with due respect to the distinctions outlined above.

77
 78 The Suggested Forms for Particular Services are by definition, suggested. The distinctions outlined above do not
 79 apply to the Suggested Forms.

80
 81 Scripture quotations in the *Directory* and the *Suggested Forms* are drawn from the King James Version with a few
 82 variations, indicated by brackets, where deemed advisable for current understanding, without prejudice to other
 83 translations. In the use of the *Directory*, any accurate, faithful translation may be substituted.

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CHAPTER I

88

THE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

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1. The living and true God, our triune Creator, has instituted the worship of himself by all people everywhere in spirit and in truth.

a. Because man’s chief end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever, all of life is to be worshipful. Nevertheless, worship itself consists primarily in specific acts of communion with God.

b. Only those people whose hearts have been made new through God’s grace by the work of the Holy Spirit can worship God.

c. While believers are to worship in secret as individuals and in private as families, they are also to worship as churches in assemblies of public worship, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected or forsaken. Public worship occurs when God, by his Word and Spirit, through the lawful government of the church, calls his people to assemble to worship him together.

2. In his Word, God has specially appointed one day in seven as a Sabbath to be kept holy to him. It is the duty of every one to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of

110 Christ the Sabbath was the last day of the week, marking the completion of six days of work, anticipating eternal
 111 rest in the coming Messiah. By raising Christ from the dead on the first day of the week, God sanctified that day.
 112 And from the time of the Apostles the church, accordingly, has kept the first day of the week holy as the Christian
 113 Sabbath, the Lord's Day, and as the day on which it is to assemble for worship. Now each weekly cycle begins with
 114 the people of God resting in Christ in the worship of his name, followed by six days of work. The Lord's Day thus
 115 both depicts that the Christian's rest has already begun in Christ, and anticipates the eternal rest of his sons and
 116 daughters in the new heaven and the new earth.

117
 118 3. God's covenant people are to devote the entire Lord's Day as holy to the Lord.

119
 120 a. In order to sanctify the day, it is necessary for them to prepare for its approach. They should attend to their
 121 ordinary affairs beforehand so that they may not be hindered from setting the Sabbath apart to God.
 122

123 b. It is advisable for each individual and family to prepare for communion with God in his public ordinances.
 124 Therefore they ought to do this by reading the Scriptures, by holy meditation, and by prayer, especially for God's
 125 blessing on the ministry of the Word and sacraments.
 126

127 c. They are then to observe a holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts concerning their
 128 everyday employment and recreations, and to devote themselves to delighting in the public and private exercises of
 129 communion with God and his people, in showing mercy and doing good in his name, and in works of necessity.
 130

131 d. They shall so order works of necessity on that day that they do not improperly detain others from the public
 132 worship of God, nor otherwise hinder them from sanctifying the Sabbath.
 133

134 4. The Lord's Day is a day of holy convocation, the day on which the Lord calls his people to assemble for public
 135 worship.
 136

137 a. Although it is fitting and proper that the members of Christ's church assemble for worship on other
 138 occasions also, which are left to the discretion of particular sessions, the Lord calls the whole congregation of each
 139 local church to the sacred duty and high privilege of assembling for public worship each Lord's Day. He expressly
 140 commands his people to draw near to him, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together.
 141

142 b. It is highly advisable that a congregation assemble for public worship at the beginning and the ending of
 143 the Lord's Day. God established this pattern for his Old Testament people when he commanded morning and
 144 evening sacrifice and incense burning. Moreover, he sanctifies the entire Lord's Day to himself and gives his people
 145 in it a foretaste of their eternal enjoyment of him and his people.
 146
 147

148 **B. The Nature of Public Worship**

149
 150 1. An assembly of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other but is, before all
 151 else, a meeting of the triune God with his covenant people. In the covenant, God promises his chosen ones that he
 152 will dwell among them as their God and they will be his people.
 153

154 a. The triune God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the divine omnipresence but, much more
 155 intimately, as the faithful covenant Savior. Through Christ, God's people have access by one Spirit to the Father.
 156

157 b. In an assembly of public worship, the triune God is not only the One to whom worship is directed, but also
 158 the One who is active in the worship of the church. Through his public ordinances, the covenant God actively works
 159 to engage his people in communion with himself. In public worship, God communes with his people, and they with
 160 him in a manner which expresses the close relationships of the Father and his redeemed children, of the Son and his
 161 beloved bride, and of the Holy Spirit and the living temple in which he dwells.
 162

163 c. Pastors and ruling elders are to endeavor to inculcate in themselves and the congregation expectations for,
 164 attitudes concerning, and behavior during public worship which are appropriate to the glorious fact that public
 165 worship is covenantal communion between God and his people in his public ordinances.

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2. Because Christ is the Mediator of the covenant, no one draws near to God except through him alone.
 - a. God's people enter the Most Holy Place, the heavenly sanctuary, by the redeeming blood of Jesus, by the new and living way opened for them through the curtain, that is, his flesh. They draw near through him as their great high priest who has not entered a man-made sanctuary but heaven itself, now to appear for them in God's presence.
 - b. Public worship is to be conducted in a manner that plainly expresses conscious reliance upon the mediation and merits of Jesus Christ. To this end, it is well that there be a prayer of confession of sin early in the worship service. It is fitting that the minister, as God's ambassador, then declare an assurance of God's grace in Christ, reminding each worshiper that he can have boldness to approach the holy God only through the mediation and merits of Jesus Christ.
3. By the Spirit of the exalted Christ, God draws near to his people and they draw near to their God. They come by grace to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, joining innumerable angels and all the people of God in joyous and reverent communion with him.
 - a. God's people not only are to come into his presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of his perfect holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness, but also are to enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise for the great salvation that he has so graciously wrought for them through his only begotten Son and which he applies to them by his Holy Spirit. All are therefore to worship with sincere devotion, reverence, and expectation.
 - b. Public worship is to be conducted in reliance on the gracious working of the Spirit of the exalted Christ, which alone can make anyone capable of such sincerity, reverence, devotion, awe, expectation, and joy. Hence, from its beginning to its end, public worship should be conducted in that simplicity which manifests dependence on the Spirit of Christ to bless his own ordinances.
 - c. Accordingly, the whole congregation should assemble promptly, that all may be present and may join together for the entire worship service. Unless necessary, none should depart until after the benediction. All should refrain from any behavior that would distract other worshipers or detract from their communion with God.
4. In public worship, God's people draw near to their God unitedly as his covenant people, the body of Christ.
 - a. For this reason the covenant children should be present so far as possible as well as adults. Because God makes his covenant with believers and their children, families should be taught and encouraged to sit together as families.
 - b. For the same reason no favoritism may be shown to any who attend. Nor may any member of the church presume to exalt himself above others as though he were more spiritual, but each shall esteem others better than himself.
 - c. The unity and catholicity of the covenant people are to be manifest in public worship. Accordingly, the service is to be conducted in a manner that enables and expects all the members of the covenant community—male and female, old and young, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, healthy and infirm, people from every race and nation—to worship together.
 - d. Because God's people worship not as an aggregation of individuals, but as a congregation of those who are members of one another in Christ, public worship is to be conducted as a corporate activity in which all the members participate as the body of Christ.
5. The triune God assembles his covenant people for public worship in order to manifest and renew their covenant bond with him and one another. The Holy Spirit engages them and draws them into the Father's presence as a living sacrifice in Christ. God himself has fellowship with them, strengthening and guiding them for life in his presence and service in his kingdom.

222 a. Public worship should be conducted in a manner that reflects God’s initiative in the covenant itself, making
 223 clear that God establishes and renews his covenant with his people, assuring God’s people of those things which
 224 they so easily forget unless Christ crucified is constantly portrayed before their eyes week after week, cultivating the
 225 expectation that God himself meets his people in Christ as the Holy Spirit works through the public ordinances,
 226 always keeping central the persons and works of the triune God.

227
 228 b. Consequently, it is well that public worship be so conducted that it is apparent that God summons his
 229 church to assemble in his presence, that he assures his people of his receiving and cleansing them through Christ the
 230 Mediator, that he consecrates them to himself and his service by his Word, that he communes with them and gives
 231 them grace to help in time of need through his means of grace, and that he sends them out to serve with his blessing.
 232

233 6. The triune God reveals the way of knowing and worshiping him in his Word, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and
 234 New Testaments, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.
 235

236 a. The principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible – either as they are expressly set down in
 237 Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture – and from no other source.
 238

239 b. God may not be worshiped according to human imaginations or inventions or in any way not prescribed by
 240 his Word, nor may the church require her members to participate in elements of worship that God’s Word does not
 241 require. Only when the elements of worship are those appointed in God’s Word, and the circumstances and forms of
 242 worship are consonant with God’s Word, is there true freedom to know God as he is and to worship him as he
 243 desires to be worshiped.
 244

245 7. The end of public worship is the glory of the triune God. To that end, Christ builds his church by perfecting the
 246 saints and adding to its membership such as are being saved—all to the glory of God.
 247

248 a. Through public worship on the Lord’s Day, God calls his people to serve him all the days of the week in their
 249 every activity, and enables them, whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.
 250

251 b. God’s people are to be led to engage in all the elements of worship with a single-minded focus on God’s
 252 glory and with a humble and dependent expectation that the exalted Lord Jesus Christ himself will edify them and
 253 build his church through his appointed means of grace— all to the glory of God.
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256 C. The Parts of Public Worship

257
 258 1. Because a service of public worship is in its essence a meeting of the triune God with his chosen people, a
 259 worship service consists of two principal parts: those elements which are performed on behalf of God (through a
 260 representative voice) and those elements which are performed by the congregation (through their own or a
 261 representative voice).
 262

263 a. By his Spirit working through the ministry of the Word, God addresses his people in the call to worship, in
 264 the salutation and benediction, in the reading and preaching of the Word, and in the sacraments.
 265

266 b. His people, enabled by the Holy Spirit, address God in prayer, in song, in offerings, in hearing the Word, in
 267 confession, and in receiving and partaking of the sacraments.
 268

269 c. It is advisable that these two parts be made to alternate.
 270

271 2. The triune God is not a passive spectator in public worship, but actively works in each element of the service of
 272 worship. Neither are the people of God to be passive spectators in public worship, but by faith are to participate
 273 actively in each element of the service of worship.
 274

275 a. Public worship should be conducted in a manner that enables and expects God’s people by faith actively to
 276 embrace the blessing of the Lord in the salutation and benediction; to pray with him who leads in prayer, so that the
 277 prayer being uttered aloud becomes their prayer; to attend, in the reading of God’s Word, to what God reveals of

278 himself, his redeeming actions for them, and his will for their lives; to confess together with all the people the faith
 279 of the church; to heed the Word of truth as the sermon is preached and to appropriate it to their lives as God, through
 280 his servant, proclaims and applies it; to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the praise of God and the
 281 edification of one another; to offer their possessions and themselves together as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

282
 283 b. Accordingly, it is appropriate that worshipers at times respond with brief spoken or sung expressions of
 284 praise or affirmation such as “hallelujah” or “amen.” The former is a heartfelt declaration that the living God alone
 285 is worthy of adoration. The latter grows out of the responsibility of God’s people to affirm solemnly and earnestly
 286 the truthfulness of his Word and the permanence of his character. It is especially fitting for the congregation to join
 287 in an “amen” at such times as a response to a blessing, a Scripture reading, a psalm or hymn, a confession of faith, or
 288 a prayer. When believers sing or say “amen” they are testifying to their wholehearted agreement with what has been
 289 spoken as being in harmony with God’s permanently valid Word.

290
 291 3. The Lord Jesus Christ has not prescribed a set order for public worship, but he has given his church a large
 292 measure of liberty in this matter. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of
 293 God’s Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is, so that all things are done decently and in order, and God’s
 294 people approach him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness.

295
 296 a. While Christ has not prescribed a set order for public worship, this does not mean that it is fitting to ignore
 297 proper and scriptural patterns of worship that have been historically observed by the church, particularly in the
 298 Reformed tradition. The order of worship should be so structured that there will be an enlightened movement on the
 299 part of the congregation from one element of the service to the next. When each act of worship is full of meaning,
 300 the order of the elements will assume a coherent, edifying form.

301
 302 b. Worship should be conducted with regard to the time, taking care that neither reading, singing, praying,
 303 preaching, or any other ordinance be disproportionate one to the other, nor the whole rendered either too short or too
 304 tedious.

305
 306 4. The session does well to ensure that the public worship assembly space is so arranged as to reflect and reinforce
 307 God’s initiative in drawing near to and gathering his people through the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

308
 309 a. Because the pulpit, baptismal font, and communion table facilitate the part of worship which is performed
 310 on behalf of God, it is fitting that they be positioned so as to draw the focus of the congregation upon the Word and
 311 sacraments, and that they be easily accessible and visible to the entire congregation throughout the worship service.
 312 Because the Word is primary and the sacraments serve to seal the Word, it is fitting that the pulpit be in the position
 313 of prominence.

314
 315 b. Because musicians and musical instruments serve the part of worship that is performed by the
 316 congregation, it is fitting that they be positioned with or behind the congregation.

317 318 319 **D. The Oversight and Conduct of Public Worship**

320
 321 1. Public worship is Christian not only when the worshipers consciously recognize that Christ is the Mediator by
 322 whom alone they can come unto God but also when they honor the exalted Christ as the living and only Head of the
 323 church who rules over public worship.

324
 325 a. He rules over public worship by his Word and Spirit, not only directly, but also through the ministry of
 326 officers in their ruling and teaching his church.

327
 328 b. The exalted Christ thus applies himself and his benefits to the elect through his Spirit working in human
 329 hearts by and with his Word, especially in its public reading, its preaching, its sealing by the sacraments, and as it is
 330 received in faith by prayer.

331
 332 2. For this reason:

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- 334 a. The session is responsible to give immediate oversight to the conduct of public worship in the local church.
335
336 b. Public worship is ordinarily to be conducted by those who have been ordained to represent the Lord Jesus
337 Christ in the administration of his Word and sacraments. The pastor of the church is ordinarily responsible to plan
338 and conduct public worship.
339
340 c. Men who have been licensed by a presbytery to preach the gospel may plan and conduct worship as
341 probationers in order that the churches may form a better judgment respecting the fitness of those by whom they are
342 to be instructed and governed. They may not, however, pronounce the salutation or the benediction or administer the
343 sacraments.
344
345 d. When the session deems it fitting, ruling elders may lead the congregation in prayer, read the Scriptures to
346 the congregation, lead unison or antiphonal readings of Scripture by the congregation, lead congregational singing,
347 or on occasion, exhort the congregation as part of public worship. They may not, however, pronounce the salutation
348 or the benediction or administer the sacraments.
349
350 e. On occasion, with the approval of the session and under the close supervision of a minister, exceptions may
351 be made for other men being prepared for the gospel ministry in Christ's church who are either members of the
352 congregation governed by that session or are ministerial interns under that session. They may not, however,
353 pronounce the salutation or the benediction or administer the sacraments.
354
355 f. No others should take such leadership in overseeing or conducting public worship.
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357

358 CHAPTER II

359 ELEMENTS OF ORDINARY PUBLIC WORSHIP

360 A. The Part from God to the People

361 1. The Call to Worship

362 a. God having summoned his people to assemble in his presence to worship him on the Lord's Day, there
363 ought to be a call to the congregation, in God's own words, to worship him. He who performs this element serves as
364 God's representative voice; accordingly it ordinarily should be performed by a minister of the Word.
365
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367 b. It is fitting that the congregation respond to the call to worship in words of Scripture, or with singing, or
368 with prayer, or with all of these.
369
370

371 2. The Public Reading of God's Word

372 a. Because the hearing of God's Word is a means of grace, the public reading of the Holy Scriptures is an
373 essential element of public worship. He who performs this serves as God's representative voice. Thus it ordinarily
374 should be performed by a minister of the Word. Through this reading, God speaks directly to the congregation in his
375 own words. For this reason the reader should refrain from interspersing the reading of God's Word with human
376 comments. He should use an accurate, faithful translation in the language of the people. He should read clearly and
377 with understanding, and the congregation should attend to the reading with the deepest reverence.
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380 b. It is desirable that portions from both the Old and New Testaments be read each Lord's Day. It is also well
381 that the law of God be read frequently.
382
383

384 c. The public reading of the Scriptures to the congregation is to be distinguished from the unison or
385 antiphonal reading of certain portions of Scripture by the minister and the congregation together. In the former God
386 addresses his people; in the latter God's people address their God, expressing in the words of Scripture their own
387
388

389 contrition, adoration, gratitude, and other holy sentiments. The Psalms of Scripture are especially appropriate for this
390 purpose.

391 392 **3. The Preaching of God's Word** 393

394 a. The preaching of the Word, the power of God unto salvation, is indispensable in the public worship of God.
395 It is therefore a matter of supreme importance that the minister preach only the Word of God, not the wisdom of
396 man, and that he handle the Word of God correctly, always setting forth Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our
397 faith. In the sermon God addresses the congregation by the mouth of his servant, and through his Spirit opens the
398 ears of his people.

399 b. The preacher shall prepare each sermon prayerfully and diligently. He may not use a text merely as a point
400 of departure but must take pains to expound the chosen text, bringing in other texts as applicable, carefully
401 explaining the meaning, and diligently applying the particular text(s) for the salvation and edification of his hearers.
402 He should take care in preaching that his exposition and application of the Scriptures be clear and simple, having
403 regard to the capacity of the hearers, in demonstration of the Spirit and power, with fervor and zeal, and that he not
404 divorce Christian duty from Christian faith.

405 The preacher must, as Christ's ambassador, seek to build up the saints in the most holy faith and beseech the
406 unconverted to be reconciled to God. Nothing is more necessary than that the gospel of salvation by grace be
407 proclaimed without any adulteration or compromise, in order that the hearers may learn to rely for salvation only on
408 the grace of God in Christ, to the exclusion of their own works or character, ascribing all glory to God alone for their
409 salvation. The preacher is to instruct his hearers in the whole counsel of God, exhort the congregation to more
410 perfect obedience to Christ, and warn them of the sins and dangers that are around them and within them. A
411 preacher fails to perform his task as a God-appointed watchman on Zion's walls who neglects to warn the
412 congregation of prevalent soul-destroying teachings by enemies of the gospel.

413 c. The session is to give diligence that no person enter the pulpit concerning whose soundness in doctrine and
414 life, or knowledge of Scripture there is reasonable doubt.

415 416 **4. The Sacraments** 417

418 a. The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, as visible signs and seals of the Word of the covenant, are
419 important elements of public worship. They represent Christ and his benefits, confirm his people's participation in
420 him, visibly mark off from the world those who belong to his church, and solemnly bind them to covenant faith and
421 loyalty.

422 b. Because the sacraments are ordinances of Christ for the benefit of the visible church, they are to be
423 administered only under the oversight of the government of the church. Moreover, in ordinary circumstances they
424 are properly administered only in a gathering of the congregation for the public worship of God, baptism being a
425 sacrament whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and the Lord's Supper
426 signifying and sealing the communion of believers with Christ and with each other as members of his mystical body.
427 Nevertheless, if a session judges that circumstances require otherwise, the sacraments may be administered
428 elsewhere; but, in any event, the church must be represented in the service.

429 c. Although the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the piety or intention of the person
430 administering them, they are not to be administered by any private person but only by a minister of the Word.

431 432 **5. Blessings** 433

434 a. The salutation and the benediction are blessings pronounced in God's name and in his own words.
435 Accordingly, they are properly used only in a gathering of Christ's church and by a minister of the Word.

436 b. A salutation is the greeting from God to his people who have gathered to worship him. It is fittingly
437 pronounced immediately before or after the call to worship. Words of salutation from Scripture are to be used, such
438

444 as the opening greeting from one of the New Testament epistles, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and
445 the Lord Jesus Christ."

446
447 c. A benediction is the pronouncement of God's blessing upon his people at the conclusion of the worship
448 service. Words of benediction taken from Scripture are to be used. The high priestly benediction, "The LORD bless
449 thee [you], and keep thee [you]: the LORD make His face-shine upon thee [you], and be gracious unto thee [you]:
450 the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee [you], and give thee [you] peace," (Numbers 6:24-26) or the Trinitarian
451 apostolic benediction "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy
452 Ghost, be with you all "(2 Corinthians 13:14) are distinctly appropriate. If, however, the minister deems another
453 benediction taken from Scripture more fitting for a particular occasion, he may use it.

454 455 **B. The Part from the People to God**

456 457 **1. Public Prayer**

458 a. Prayer is an essential element of public worship. In order to be accepted by God prayer is to be by faith, in
459 the name of the Son of God, by the help of his Spirit, and according to God's will.

460 b. In preparation for the service, the session should provide circumstances conducive to the people adopting
461 an attitude appropriate to worship. It is highly advisable that each person prepare by engaging in silent prayer prior
462 to the beginning of the service.

463 c. He who leads in public prayer serves as the voice of the congregation. For this reason, he should pray in
464 such a way, in clear words and in the plural, that the entire assembly of God's people can pray with him; and it is the
465 duty of the members of the congregation not only to hear his words but also to pray them in their hearts. To these
466 ends he who leads should diligently prepare himself for public prayers so that he may perform this duty with
467 propriety and with profit to the worshippers.

468 d. It is particularly appropriate that public prayer be led by a pastor of the congregation, because in it he both
469 guides the people in their corporate prayer to God and teaches them how to pray biblically. Accordingly, every
470 minister should, by a thorough acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, by the study of the best writings on prayer, by
471 meditation, and by a life of communion with God, endeavor to acquire both the spirit and the skill of prayer, as
472 should ruling elders. When a guest minister is present, it is well that a pastor or ruling elder, as one who knows the
473 congregation, lead in the prayers of intercession.

474 e. Near the beginning of the service there should be a brief prayer of approach to God in response to his call
475 to enter his presence for worship. It may express humble adoration, confess unworthiness and inability to worship
476 aright, seek his merciful acceptance through Jesus Christ, and invoke the gracious working of the Holy Spirit.

477 f. During the service there should be comprehensive prayer which may be offered as more than one prayer
478 throughout the worship service. Such prayer should include adoration of God's perfections, thanksgiving for all his
479 mercies, confession of sin, supplication for forgiveness through the blood of the atonement and for renewal by the
480 Holy Spirit, lamentation in times of distress or crisis, and intercession for the needs of God's people and others. It is
481 fitting that the congregation intercede for the whole of mankind; for civil rulers; for the church universal; for
482 Christian missions at home and abroad, Christian education and other Christian activities; for our whole Church; for
483 churches in ties of like faith with us; for the welfare of the local congregation itself, including its officers, its
484 ministries, and its members, pleading for their growth in sanctification and remembering the daily needs and care of
485 the people—the families, the singles, the rising generation, the elderly, the poor, the sick, the dying, the mourning,
486 the erring, and unsaved loved ones; and for whatever else may seem particularly suitable.

487 g. It is fitting that a prayer of confession of sin precede or follow any reading of the law of God to the
488 congregation.

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498 h. It is appropriate that there be a brief offertory prayer either immediately preceding or immediately
 499 following the worship of God with offerings. Such prayer may thank God for his gifts, devote the offering and the
 500 worshippers to his service, and invoke his blessing on its use and on those who give.
 501

502 i. It is fitting to pray at the time of the reading and preaching of the Word. Such prayer may petition for the
 503 Holy Spirit to grant illumination and to apply the Word preached to the minds, hearts, and lives of the people and
 504 give thanks for the Word received. Ordinarily such prayer should be by the one preaching the Word.
 505

506 j. While public prayer must always be offered with deep humility and holy reverence and be free from vain
 507 repetition or display of words, it can be fitting at times for the entire congregation to pray vocally in unison. The
 508 form of prayer that our Lord Jesus taught his disciples, commonly called “the Lord’s Prayer,” is particularly
 509 appropriate for this use by the congregation. Great care should be taken, however, to guard against allowing this
 510 practice to become a mere formula or ritual.
 511

512 k. It is fitting to encourage the congregation to join vocally in a corporate “amen” at the conclusion of a
 513 prayer.
 514

515 2. Congregational Singing

516 a. Congregational singing is a duty and privilege to be practiced and cultivated in all the churches. Let every
 517 member of the church take part in this act of worship. God’s people should sing not merely with the lips, but with
 518 understanding and with grace in their hearts, making melody to the Lord.
 519

520 b. As public worship is for the praise and glory of God and the building up of the saints, not for the
 521 entertainment of the congregation nor the praise of man, the character of the songs used therein is to befit the nature
 522 of God and the purpose of worship.
 523

524 c. Congregations do well to sing the metrical versions or other musical settings of the Psalms frequently in
 525 public worship. Congregations also do well to sing hymns of praise that respond to the full scope of divine
 526 revelation.
 527

528 d. In the choice of song for public worship, great care must be taken that all the materials of song are fully in
 529 accord with the Scriptures. The words are to be suitable for the worship of God and the tunes are to be appropriate to
 530 the meaning of the words and to the occasion of public worship. Care should be taken to the end that the songs
 531 chosen will express those specific truths and sentiments which are appropriate at the time of their use in the worship
 532 service.
 533

534 e. Musical gifts are properly used in public worship to assist the congregation in its worship of God. They
 535 may not be used for the praise or applause of men. No person may take a special part in the musical service unless
 536 he is a professing Christian who adorns his profession with a godly walk, or who is a baptized covenant child whose
 537 conduct is appropriate to his status.
 538

539 3. Public Confession of Faith

540 a. Individual believers are to publicly profess their faith in Christ before God and his people in order formally
 541 to pledge their commitment to serve Christ and to be welcomed into all the privileges of full communion with God’s
 542 people.
 543

544 b. It is also fitting that the congregation as one body confess its common faith, using creeds that are true to the
 545 Word of God, such as the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed.
 546

547 4. The Bringing of Offerings

548 a. The bringing of offerings in the public assembly of God’s people on the Lord’s Day is a solemn act of
 549 worship to almighty God. The people of God are to set aside to him the firstfruits of their labors; in so doing, they
 550 should present themselves with thanksgiving as a living sacrifice to God. All should participate in this act of worship
 551

554 when God gives opportunity for it. Parents are to instruct and encourage their children by precept and example to
 555 give of their substance regularly, purposefully, generously, and joyfully to the Lord through his church.
 556

557 b. It is the duty of the pastor, since he is to proclaim to the people the whole counsel of God, to cultivate
 558 biblical stewardship and the grace of liberal giving in the members of the church. He should remind them of the
 559 Scripture admonition that everyone is to give as the Lord has prospered him, of the assurance of Scripture that God
 560 loves a cheerful giver, and of the blessed example of the Lord Jesus Christ who, though he was rich, became poor in
 561 order that poor sinners through his poverty might become rich.

562 c. The session shall take care that the offerings of the congregation are used only for biblical purposes such as
 563 the maintenance of public worship, the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, the ministry of mercy in
 564 Christ's name, and other Christian objects. The offering ordinarily should not be used to transmit funds to causes
 565 other than the ministries of the Church. If a member of the Church designates a gift to a particular cause, it shall be
 566 the responsibility of the session to determine, before the gift is accepted, if it is appropriate to support that cause
 567 through the Church or if the gift should be returned to the donor.

568 d. It is desirable that Christian love be demonstrated by offerings for the use of the deacons in the ministry of
 569 mercy on behalf of the church. It is appropriate that a special offering be received for this purpose following the
 570 Lord's Supper.
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576 CHAPTER III

577 THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

578 A. General Provisions

579 1. In order that the sacraments may be observed with discernment and profit, it is imperative that adequate
 580 preparation be made prior to their administration. Before observing the sacraments, God's people ought to meditate
 581 on the teaching of the Word of God concerning them, particularly as summarized in the Confession of Faith and
 582 Catechisms. It is also advisable that from time to time the preaching include suitable instruction on the sacraments.
 583 Moreover, when the sacraments are being celebrated the minister shall always accompany them by the preaching of
 584 the Word, and he shall take especial care in that preaching to proclaim Christ and his benefits, so that God's people
 585 can understand what the sacrament means. In connection with the administration of the sacraments, he shall set forth
 586 a summary of the teaching of the Word of God as to their institution, meaning, and nature.
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 588
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 590

591 2. The baptism of infants is not to be unduly delayed, but is to be administered as soon as practicable. The baptism
 592 of adults must await their public profession of faith in Christ.
 593

594 3. The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated frequently, but the frequency may be determined by each session as it
 595 may judge most conducive to edification.
 596

597 4. In the administration of the sacraments, the minister shall follow the directions prescribed in this chapter but,
 598 except in the case of the words of the baptismal formula, he is not required to use the exact language of the indented
 599 forms (below), which are suggested as appropriate. He may employ these or similar forms, using his own liberty and
 600 godly wisdom as he deems best for the edification of the people.
 601
 602

603 B. Baptism

604 1. The Baptism of Infants

605 a. Prerequisites

609
 610 For a child to be presented for baptism, at least one parent must be a communicant member of the Church, in good
 611 standing, normally of the local congregation. In order to present a child for baptism, parents shall make prior
 612 arrangements with the session. Before presentation for baptism, the session shall ensure that instruction has been
 613 given to the parent(s) as to the nature, privileges, and responsibilities of baptism for the parents and the child. Only
 614 parents who are communicant members of the Church may be permitted to take parental vows. If the session shall
 615 judge it appropriate, a parent who is not a communicant member may stand with the spouse during the baptism. In
 616 such a circumstance, it shall be the duty of the minister to inform the congregation of the situation, including that the
 617 one parent is not a member of this congregation and is not taking the vows. In extraordinary circumstances, at the
 618 parents' request, the session may permit the baptism of a child of parents who are communicant members of another
 619 church which is approved by the session, on behalf of and with the written permission of the governing body of that
 620 church. In such a case the session shall inform the other governing body, in writing, when the baptism has been
 621 administered.

622
 623 **b. The Administration of Baptism to Infants**

624
 625 **(1) The Institution of the Sacrament**

626
 627 The minister ought to read the words of the institution of the sacrament of baptism from a passage such as Matthew
 628 28:18–20.

629
 630 **(2) The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament**

631
 632 He shall first summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God and the Confession and
 633 Catechisms of this church as to the meaning and nature of the sacrament of baptism. In doing so, he may use these
 634 or like words:

635
 636 The Lord Jesus Christ instituted baptism as a covenant sign and seal for his church. He uses it not only for
 637 the solemn admission of the person who is baptized into the visible church, but also to depict and to
 638 confirm his ingrafting of that person into himself and his including that person in the covenant of grace.

639
 640 The Lord uses baptism to portray to us that we and our children are conceived and born in sin and need to
 641 be cleansed.

642
 643 He uses it to witness and seal to us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation
 644 through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the
 645 Spirit of Christ, together with our death unto sin and our resurrection unto newness of life by virtue of the
 646 death and resurrection of Christ. The time of the outward application of the sign does not necessarily
 647 coincide with the inward work of the Holy Spirit which the sign represents and seals to us. Because these
 648 gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the triune God, who is pleased to claim us as his very own,
 649 we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

650
 651 In our baptism the Lord puts his name on us, claims us as his own, and summons us to assume the
 652 obligations of the covenant. He calls us to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, to renounce the devil, the
 653 world, and the flesh, and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.

654
 655 **(3) Exhortation to the Congregation to Improve their Baptisms**

656
 657 Then the minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:

658
 659 As solemn vows are about to be made before you, and baptism is now to be administered, you who are
 660 baptized will do well to take this occasion to reflect on your own baptism. Christ has put his name and
 661 claim on you. He calls you to be repentant for your sins against your covenant God, to confess your faith
 662 before men, and to live in newness of life to God who sealed his covenant with you by the blood of his own
 663 Son.
 664

665 **(4) The Ground of Baptizing Infants**

666
667 The minister shall then give instruction as to the ground of the baptism of infants. He may use these or like words:

668
669 Although our young children do not yet understand these things, they are nevertheless to be baptized. For
670 God commands that all who are under his covenant of grace be given the sign of the covenant.

671
672 God made the promise of the covenant to believers and to their offspring. In the Old Testament, he declared
673 to Abraham: “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee [you] and thy [your] seed after thee
674 [you] in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee [you], and to thy [your] seed
675 after thee [you]” (Gen. 17:7). For this reason, in the Old Testament, God commanded that covenant infants
676 be given the sign of circumcision.

677
678 The covenant is the same in essence in both the Old and the New Testaments. Indeed, the grace of God for
679 the consolation of believers is even more fully manifested in the New Testament. Thus, rather than
680 rescinding the covenant promise to believers and to their offspring in the New Testament, God reaffirms it.
681 He declares that “the promise is unto you, and to your children” [Acts 2:39]. He promises, “Believe on the
682 Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt [you will] be saved, and thy [your] house” [Acts 16:31]. He affirms that if
683 even one parent is a believer, the children are “holy” [1 Cor. 7:14]. Moreover, our Savior admitted little
684 children into his presence, embracing and blessing them, and saying, “of such is the kingdom of God” [Mk.
685 10:14].

686
687 And so in the New Testament no less than in the Old, the children of believers have an interest in the
688 covenant and a right to the covenant sign and to the outward privileges of the covenant people, the church.
689 In the New Testament, baptism has replaced circumcision as the covenant sign. Therefore, by the covenant
690 sign of baptism the children of believers are to be distinguished from the world and solemnly admitted into
691 the visible church.

692
693 **(5) The Covenant Commitment of the Parents**

694
695 The minister shall then require the parents to vow publicly their duty as Christian parents to present their children
696 for baptism and to nurture them in the Christian faith, by answering these or equivalent questions in the affirmative:

- 697
698 (1) Do you acknowledge that although our children are conceived and born in sin and therefore are subject
699 to condemnation, they are holy in Christ by virtue of the covenant of grace, and as children of the covenant
700 are to be baptized?
- 701 (2) Do you promise to teach diligently to (name of child) the principles of our holy Christian faith, revealed
702 in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and summarized in the Confession of Faith and
703 Catechisms of this Church?
- 704 (3) Do you promise to pray regularly with and for (name of child), and to set an example of piety and
705 godliness before (him/her)?
- 706 (4) Do you promise to endeavor, by all the means that God has appointed, to bring (name of child) up in the
707 nurture and admonition of the Lord, encouraging (him/her) to appropriate for (himself/herself) the blessings
708 and fulfill the obligations of the covenant?

709
710 **(6) Prayer**

711
712 The minister shall then pray for the presence and blessing of the triune God that the grace signified and sealed by
713 baptism may be abundantly realized.

714
715 **(7) The Baptism**

716
717 Then, calling the child by name, he shall say, as he baptizes him with water, without adding any other ceremony:

718
719 (Name of child), I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

720

721 **(8) The Covenant Commitment of the Congregation**
 722

723 It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation, in these or like words:
 724

725 As (name) is baptized into Christ and becomes a member of his visible church, the whole congregation is
 726 obligated to love (him/her) and receive (him/her) as a member of the body of Christ. For “we were all
 727 baptized by one Spirit into one body,” and therefore are members of one another. Christ claims this little
 728 child as his own and calls you to receive (him/her) in love and commitment. Therefore you ought to
 729 commit yourself before God to assist (name of child) and (his/her) parents in (his/her) Christian nurture by
 730 godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith.

731
 732 **(9) Charge**
 733

734 It is then fitting that the minister give a charge to the parents in the following or like words:
 735

736 Beloved in Christ Jesus, we give thanks to God for this child that he has given you, and for your expressed
 737 desire for (him/her) to know the Lord and to follow him all (his/her) days. Along with the great blessing of
 738 the gift of this child have come responsibilities that you have just acknowledged and to which you have
 739 solemnly committed yourselves, and I charge you that in humble reliance upon the grace of God by the
 740 diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer—you continue
 741 steadfastly in the commitments that you have made today before God and these witnesses.
 742

743 **(10) Prayer**
 744

745 The whole service of baptism shall then be concluded with prayer. It is well in such prayer to thank the Lord for his
 746 covenant of grace, rejoice that this child has been included, and to ask the Lord to graciously enable him to be a
 747 covenant-keeper, daily dying to sin and walking in newness of life in Christ.
 748

749
 750 **2. The Baptism of Adults**
 751

752 **a. Prerequisites**
 753

754 An adult who seeks to be baptized shall make a public profession of his faith before the congregation prior to the
 755 baptism. He shall previously have received instruction in the Christian faith in accordance with the confessional
 756 standards of this Church, including instruction as to the meaning of baptism, and have also made before the session
 757 of the church a credible profession of faith in Christ according to the provisions of Chapter IV, Section A, third
 758 paragraph of this Directory.
 759

760 **b. The Administration of Baptism to Adults**
 761

762 **(1) The Institution of the Sacrament**
 763

764 The minister ought to read the words of the institution of the sacrament of baptism from a passage such as Matthew
 765 28:18–20.
 766

767 **(2) The Covenant Commitment of the One Receiving Baptism**
 768

769 At the time of the service at which the person is to be baptized he shall first profess his faith publicly before the
 770 assembled congregation. The minister may address him in these or like words:
 771

772 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that our Savior has
 773 sought and found you and through faith you have become a partaker of the covenant of grace. We rejoice
 774 that in his grace, he has brought you to this congregation and given you the desire to profess your faith
 775 before us and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving
 776 assent to the following questions.

777
778 To this end the minister shall require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by answering these or
779 equivalent questions in the affirmative:
780

- 781 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
782 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
783 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
784 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
785 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
786 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
787 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
788 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
789 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
790 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
791 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
792 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?
793

794 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.
795

796 After answers to the above questions in the affirmative, the minister shall proceed to the baptism.
797

798 (3) The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament 799

800 He shall then summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God and the Confession and
801 Catechisms of this church as to the meaning and nature of the sacrament of baptism. He may use these or like words:
802

803 The Lord Jesus Christ instituted baptism as a covenant sign and seal for his church. He uses it not only for
804 the solemn admission of the person who is baptized into the visible church, but also to depict and to
805 confirm his ingrafting of that person into himself and his including that person in the covenant of grace.
806

807 The Lord uses baptism to portray to us that we and our children are conceived and born in sin and need to
808 be cleansed.
809

810 He uses it to witness and seal to us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation
811 through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the
812 Spirit of Christ, together with our death unto sin and our resurrection unto newness of life by virtue of the
813 death and resurrection of Christ. Because these gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the triune
814 God, who is pleased to claim us as his very own, we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son
815 and of the Holy Spirit.
816

817 In our baptism the Lord puts his name on us, claims us as his own, and summons us to assume the
818 obligations of the covenant. He calls us to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, to renounce the devil, the
819 world, and the flesh, and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.
820

821 (4) Exhortation to the Congregation to Improve their Baptisms 822

823 Then the minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:
824

825 As solemn vows have been made before you, and baptism is now to be administered, you who are baptized
826 will do well to take this occasion to reflect on your own baptism. Christ has put his name and claim on you.
827 He calls you to be repentant for your sins against your covenant God, to confess your faith before men, and
828 to live in newness of life to God who sealed his covenant with you by the blood of his own Son.
829

830 (5) Prayer 831

832 Thereupon the minister shall pray for the presence and blessing of the triune God that the grace signified and sealed
833 by baptism may be abundantly realized.

834
835 **(6) The Baptism**

836
837 Then, calling the person by name, he shall baptize him with water, without any other ceremony, saying:

838
839 (Name of person), I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

840
841 **(7) The Covenant Commitment of the Congregation**

842
843 It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

844
845 As (name) is baptized into Christ and becomes a member of his visible church, the whole congregation is
846 obligated to receive (him/her). For “we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body,” and therefore are
847 members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to serve (him/her) in
848 love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by
849 godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

850
851 **(8) Welcome and Charge**

852
853 It is then fitting that the minister address the baptized person in the following or like words.

854
855 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
856 God’s people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the holy supper.

857
858 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
859 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

860
861 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

862
863 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
864 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

865
866
867 **(9) Prayer**

868
869 The whole service of baptism shall be concluded with prayer. It is well in such a prayer to thank the Lord for his
870 covenant of grace, rejoice that this (brother/sister) has been included, and to ask the Lord to graciously enable him to
871 be a covenant keeper, daily dying to sin and walking in newness of life in Christ.

872
873 **C. The Lord’s Supper**

874
875
876 **1. The Institution of the Sacrament**

877
878 The minister shall read the words of the institution and instruction of the Lord’s Supper as found in 1 Corinthians
879 11:23-29 or one of the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, or Luke 22:14-20). In addition he may
880 read words of instruction from passages such as John 6 and 1 Corinthians 10.

881
882 **2. The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament**

883
884 He shall then summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God as to the meaning and nature of
885 the sacrament in the following or like words:

886

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper as an ordinance to be observed by his church until he comes again. It is not a re-sacrificing of Christ but is a remembrance of the once-for-all sacrifice of himself in his death for our sins. Nor is it a mere memorial to Christ's sacrifice. It is a means of grace by which God feeds us with the crucified, resurrected, exalted Christ. He does so by his Holy Spirit and through faith. Thus he strengthens us in our warfare against sin and in our endeavors to serve him in holiness. The sacrament further signifies and seals the forgiveness of our sin and our nourishment and growth in Christ. The bread and wine represent the crucified body and the shed blood of the Savior, which he gave for his people. In this sacrament God confirms that he is faithful and true to fulfill the promises of his covenant and he calls us to deeper gratitude for our salvation, to renewed consecration, and to more faithful obedience. The Supper is also a bond and pledge of the communion that believers have with him and with each other as members of his body. As Scripture says, "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." [1 Cor. 10:17] The Supper anticipates the consummation of the ages when Christ returns to gather all his redeemed people at the glorious wedding feast of the Lamb. As we come to the Lord's Table we humbly resolve to deny ourselves, to crucify the sin that is within us, to resist the devil, and to follow Christ as becomes those who bear his name.

3. Invitation and Fencing the Table

The minister shall then declare who may come to and who are excluded from the Lord's Table according to the Word of God. He may use the following or like words:

It is my privilege as a minister of Christ to invite all who are right with God and his church through faith in the Lord Jesus, to come to the Lord's Table. If you have received Christ and are resting upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to you in the gospel, if you are a baptized and professing communicant member in good standing in a church that professes the gospel of God's free grace in Jesus Christ, and if you live penitently and seek to walk in godliness before the Lord, then this Supper is for you, and I invite you in Christ's name to eat the bread and drink the cup.

At the same time, God's Word says, "whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth [eats] and drinketh [drinks] unworthily, eateth [eats] and drinketh [drinks] damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" [1 Cor. 11:27-29]. If you are not trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you are not a member of a faithful Christian church, if you are not living penitently and seeking to walk in godliness before the Lord, then I warn you in the name of Christ not to approach the holy table of the Lord.

This warning is not aimed to keep the humble and contrite from the table of the Lord, as if it were for those who were free from sin. In fact, it is for sinners that our Lord gives this Supper as a means of grace. Through the elements of bread and wine, our Lord graciously gives himself and all his benefits to everyone who eats and drinks in a worthy manner, discerning the body of the Lord. It is one thing to eat and drink in a worthy manner. It is very different, however, to imagine that we are worthy to eat and drink. We dare not come to the Lord's Table as if we were worthy and righteous in ourselves. We come in a worthy manner if we recognize that we are unworthy sinners who need our Savior, if we consciously discern his body given for our sins, if we hunger and thirst after Christ, giving thanks for his grace, trusting in his merits, feeding on him by faith, renewing our covenant with him and his people.

Let us examine our minds and hearts to determine whether such discernment is ours, to the end that we may partake to the glory of God and to our growth in the grace of Christ. Come then with joy and thankfulness to the Lord's Table. The Lord's Supper is medicine for poor, sick souls. Come to Jesus and find rest, refreshing, and nourishment for your weak and weary soul.

4. Exhortation

If desired, the minister may exhort the people of God, in the following or other words, to embrace in the sign the thing that is signified:

943 Beloved congregation, lift up your hearts from these visible elements even to heaven itself, where Jesus
 944 Christ is, seated at the right hand of the Father, from where we look for him to return and perfect our
 945 redemption. All the promises of God are yes and amen in him. Every spiritual blessing is found in him.
 946 With joyful hearts, in Christian love, partake of his Table, giving thanks for the great love that he has
 947 shown to us.

948
 949 **5. Prayer**

950
 951 The distribution of the elements shall be preceded by prayer. It is well in such prayer to praise God for his mighty
 952 power and grace in bringing salvation; confess our unworthiness to come to the Table because of our own utter lack
 953 of righteousness; reaffirm our trust in God's grace and in Christ's righteousness and mediation; plead for the Lord to
 954 grant the gracious, effectual working of his Spirit in us; thank God for the elements, request him to use them for
 955 their intended purpose; and ask him to grant that by faith his people may feed upon Jesus Christ, crucified and raised
 956 for them, so that, being strengthened by grace they might live in him and for him.

957
 958
 959 **6. Partaking of the Elements**

960
 961 After prayer and thanksgiving the minister shall take the bread, saying, in the following or like words,

962
 963 Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to
 964 his disciples, as I, ministering in his name, give this bread to you.

965
 966 The minister shall then break the bread and give it to the people. The bread may be eaten either upon reception of it,
 967 or in unison when all have been served, as the session may judge most conducive to edification. The minister may
 968 continue, saying:

969
 970 "Take, eat, this is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of me."

971
 972 Having given the bread, the minister shall take the cup and give it to the people, saying in the following or like
 973 words,

974
 975 In the same manner, our Savior also took the cup, and having given thanks as has been done in his name, he
 976 gave it to his disciples, as I ministering in his name give this cup to you.

977
 978 The minister shall then give the cup as in the distribution of the bread. The minister may continue, saying:

979
 980 Our Lord Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of
 981 sins; drink of it all of you"

982
 983 **7. Response of Thanksgiving and Commitment**

984
 985 When all have partaken, prayer should be offered. It is well in such prayer to give thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus
 986 Christ through whom we have the forgiveness of sins; recommit God's people to Christ and to each other; present
 987 them as a living sacrifice to God; and plead that the Holy Spirit will make the sacrament effectual to the edifying
 988 and strengthening of God's people.

989
 990 It is well that the congregation respond by singing a psalm or hymn that focuses on the benefits of Christ's death and
 991 the triumph of the gospel, bringing forth gratitude and joy and renewed commitment of the believer to his Lord, and
 992 that an offering be taken for the relief of the poor or for some other sacred purpose.

993
 994 **8. Blessing**

995
 996 The following benediction is particularly appropriate when the Lord's Supper has been celebrated:

997

998 “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep,
999 through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working
1000 in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.
1001 Amen.”
1002
1003
1004

1005 **Chapter IV**

1006 **Public Reception of Church Members**

1007 **A. General Provisions**

- 1008 1. Only those may be admitted to full communion in the church who have been baptized and have made public
1009 profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
- 1010 2. In order to aid those who contemplate making public profession or reaffirmation of faith in Christ to understand
1011 the implication of this significant act and to perform it meaningfully, the pastor or someone approved by the session
1012 shall conduct classes in Christian doctrine and life both for the covenant youth and for any others who may manifest
1013 an interest in the way of salvation.
- 1014 3. Before permitting anyone to make profession of his faith in the presence of the congregation, the session shall
1015 announce his name to the congregation on a prior Lord’s Day in order that the members of the Church may have
1016 opportunity to acquaint the session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a
1017 credible profession. In order for the session to assure itself so far as possible that the candidate makes a credible
1018 profession, it shall examine him to ascertain that he possesses the doctrinal knowledge requisite for saving faith in
1019 the Lord Jesus Christ, relies on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian
1020 life.
- 1021 4. In the public reception of church members, the minister shall follow the directions prescribed in this chapter,
1022 but he is not required to use the exact language of the indented forms (below), which are suggested as appropriate.
1023 He may employ these or similar forms, using his own liberty and godly wisdom as he deems best for the edification
1024 of the people.
- 1025 5. The session shall always take special care to preserve the full meaning of membership vows. If the session
1026 modifies the vows it shall record those vows and its rationale in its minutes and report it to the next stated meeting
1027 of the presbytery.
- 1028 6. Unbaptized covenant children whose parent(s) are communicant members of the congregation may be received
1029 only by baptism.
- 1030 7. Baptized children ordinarily shall be received as noncommunicant members when their parents are received as
1031 communicant members..
- 1032 8. Noncommunicant members of the congregation may be received into communicant membership only by
1033 confession of faith.
- 1034 9. The following provisions are designed to assist ministers and sessions to receive members in accordance with
1035 the Book of Discipline II.B.2, which provisions should always be followed.
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1049

1050 **B. Reception into Full Communion of Noncommunicant Members by Profession of Faith**

1051

1052 1. When a noncommunicant member is received into full communion, that reception is effective at the time of his
 1053 public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, it is highly advisable that the minister
 1054 remind the people that he is already a member of the church, albeit a noncommunicant member, and has been
 1055 receiving the blessings of Christ as a member of the church, and that those blessings have resulted in this day
 1056 wherein, having given evidence of conscious saving faith in Christ, he is now about to confess that faith and become
 1057 a communicant member of the congregation. The minister may then address him in these or like words:
 1058

1059 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that you have
 1060 accepted God's covenant promise that was signified and sealed unto you in your infancy by holy baptism.
 1061 We ask you now to profess your faith publicly..
 1062

1063 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
 1064 equivalent questions:
 1065

1066 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
 1067 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

1068 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
 1069 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
 1070 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?

1071 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
 1072 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

1073 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
 1074 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
 1075 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

1076 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
 1077 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?
 1078

1079 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.
 1080

1081 3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:
 1082

1083 From the time [name] was baptized, the whole congregation has been obligated to love and receive
 1084 (him/her) as a member of the church. As (he/she) is received into full communion, the congregation is
 1085 reminded of these obligations. For in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this
 1086 (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to receive (him/her) in love and commitment. Therefore you ought
 1087 to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and
 1088 encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.
 1089

1090 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
 1091 following or similar words:
 1092

1093 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
 1094 God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the holy supper.
 1095

1096 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
 1097 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.
 1098

1099 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.
 1100

1101 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
 1102 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.
 1103

1104 This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.
 1105

1106
 1107

C. Reception by Letter of Transfer from Another Orthodox Presbyterian Church

1108
 1109 When a person is received into membership on letter of transfer from another Orthodox Presbyterian congregation,
 1110 that reception is effective at the time of the action of the session to receive. Nevertheless, a session may deem it
 1111 appropriate to welcome that person publicly into the congregation and allow him to give public expression to his
 1112 faith. If this is done, it shall be made clear to the congregation that the person has already been received by action of
 1113 the session. Nevertheless, the minister may address him in appropriate words similar to those found below at D.4.
 1114

1115 **D. Reception by Letter of Transfer from Another Church of Like Faith and Practice**

1116
 1117 1. When a person is received into membership on letter of transfer from another church of like faith and practice
 1118 approved by the session, that reception is effective at the time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of
 1119 that person's public reception, the minister shall address him in these or like words:
 1120

1121 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that you have
 1122 accepted God's promise of salvation and publicly confessed your faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. We
 1123 praise him that he brought you into communicant membership in a church of like faith and practice with
 1124 this congregation. We rejoice that God, in his gracious providence, has now brought you here and given
 1125 you a desire to unite with us, and that your former church has committed you to our fellowship and
 1126 oversight. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following
 1127 questions.
 1128

1129 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
 1130 equivalent questions:
 1131

- 1132 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
 1133 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
 1134 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
 1135 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
 1136 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
 1137 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
 1138 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
 1139 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
 1140 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
 1141 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
 1142 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
 1143 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?
 1144

1145 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.
 1146

1147 3. The minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:
 1148

1149 As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive
 1150 (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and
 1151 calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in
 1152 (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in
 1153 the fellowship of believers.
 1154

1155 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
 1156 following or like words:
 1157

1158 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
 1159 this congregation of God's people.
 1160 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
 1161 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.
 1162

1163 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

1164
1165 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
1166 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.
1167

1168 This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.
1169
1170

1171 **E. Reception by Reaffirmation of Faith**

1172
1173 1. When a person is received into membership by reaffirmation of faith, that reception is effective at the time of
1174 his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, the minister shall address him in
1175 these or like words:
1176

1177 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that you have
1178 accepted God's promise of salvation and publicly confessed your faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. We
1179 rejoice that God, in his gracious providence, has brought you into this congregation and given you a desire
1180 to reaffirm the faith that you have previously professed, and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before
1181 us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following questions.
1182

1183 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
1184 equivalent questions:
1185

- 1186 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
1187 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
1188 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
1189 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
1190 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
1191 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
1192 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
1193 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
1194 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
1195 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
1196 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
1197 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?
1198

1199 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.
1200

1201 3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:
1202

1203 As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive
1204 (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and
1205 calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in
1206 (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in
1207 the fellowship of believers.
1208

1209 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
1210 following or like words:
1211

1212 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
1213 this congregation of God's people.

1214 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
1215 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.
1216

1217 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.
1218

1219 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
1220 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

1221
1222 This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

1223
1224 **F. Reception of New Members by Public Profession of Faith**

1225
1226 1. When an unbaptized person is received into membership by profession of faith, that reception is effective at the
1227 time of his public profession of faith and baptism. He shall be received in accord with Chapter III.B.2 of this
1228 Directory. When a previously baptized person who is not a member of the congregation and has not previously
1229 made a confession of his faith is received into membership by profession of faith, that reception is effective at the
1230 time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, the minister shall address
1231 him in these or like words:

1232
1233 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that our Savior has
1234 sought and found you and through faith you have become a partaker of the covenant of grace. We rejoice
1235 that in his grace, he has brought you to this congregation and given you the desire to profess your faith
1236 before us and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving
1237 assent to the following questions.

1238
1239 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
1240 equivalent questions:

- 1241
1242 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
1243 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
1244 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
1245 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
1246 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
1247 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
1248 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
1249 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
1250 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
1251 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
1252 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
1253 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

1254
1255 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

1256
1257 3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

1258
1259 As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive
1260 (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and
1261 calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in
1262 (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in
1263 the fellowship of believers.

1264
1265 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
1266 following or like words:

1267
1268 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
1269 God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the holy supper.

1270
1271 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
1272 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

1273
1274 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

1275
 1276 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
 1277 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.
 1278

1279 This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.
 1280

1281
 1282

1283 CHAPTER V

1284 SPECIAL OCCASIONS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

1285 Under the gospel, we are commanded to keep no other particular day holy, except the Lord's Day. Nevertheless,
 1286 God's people may observe special occasions as the dispensations of God's providence administer cause and
 1287 opportunity. Such observance is both consonant with Scripture and pastorally appropriate.
 1288
 1289

1290
 1291

1292 A. Prayer and Fasting

1293
 1294 1. When great and notable calamities come upon or threaten the church, community, or nation, when judgment is
 1295 deserved because of sin, when the people seek some special blessing from the Lord, or when a pastor is to be
 1296 ordained or installed (FG XXIII.7), it is fitting that the people of God engage in times of solemn prayer and fasting.
 1297

1298 2. Prayer and fasting may be observed by private individuals and families at their discretion or by the Church at
 1299 the discretion of the appropriate judicatory. If the civil authority calls for a time of prayer and fasting that the
 1300 judicatories of the Church deem to be in harmony with the Scriptures, they should consider issuing such a call to
 1301 their members.
 1302

1303 3. Public notice is to be given before the time of prayer and fasting comes, to enable persons to order their
 1304 temporal affairs so that they can participate.
 1305

1306 4. It is especially appropriate on days of prayer and fasting called by the Church that the people of God gather for
 1307 a time of prayer, the singing of psalms and hymns, and the reading and preaching of the Word of God. Let them
 1308 lament their distress or unworthiness before the Lord, confess their sins, humbly implore the Lord for deliverance
 1309 from the judgment present or imminent or for the blessing sought, and commit themselves anew to the faithful
 1310 service of the Lord their God. It is fitting on such days that God's people abstain from food and from such activities
 1311 as may distract from their solemn engagement in prayer.
 1312

1313
 1314

1315 B. Thanksgiving

1316 1. When God's blessings on the church, community, or nation are particularly evident, it is fitting that the people
 1317 of God engage in special times of thanksgiving.
 1318

1319 2. Special times of thanksgiving may be observed by private individuals and families at their discretion or by the
 1320 Church as called by the appropriate judicatory. If the civil authority calls for a time of thanksgiving that the
 1321 judicatories of the Church deem to be in harmony with the Scriptures, they should consider issuing such a call to
 1322 their members.
 1323

1324 3. Public notice is to be given before the day of thanksgiving comes, to enable persons to order their temporal
 1325 affairs so that they can participate.
 1326

1327 4. It is especially appropriate on special days of thanksgiving called by the Church that the people of God gather
 1328 for prayer, testimony to God's blessings, joyful singing of psalms and hymns, and the reading and preaching of the
 1329 Word of God. Let them give thanks to God for his goodness to his people and especially for the greatness of his

1330 mercies to them in Christ. And let them commit themselves anew to the faithful service of the Lord their God in
1331 gratitude for his blessings. It is fitting on such days that God's people spend the day in expressions of Christian love
1332 and charity toward one another, rejoicing more and more in the Lord, as becomes those who make the joy of the
1333 Lord their strength. Also, they may feast together before the Lord with joy and thanksgiving.