

Suggested Forms for Particular Services

I

THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE

A. Guiding principles

1. Marriage is an institution ordained by God for the honor and happiness of mankind, in which one man and one woman enter into a bodily and spiritual union so long as both shall live. It is not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity prohibited by the Word of God.
2. Christians are to marry only in the Lord. Therefore, although it is not required, it is fitting that their marriage be solemnized by a minister of the Word in order that special instruction may be given to them and suitable prayers made, when they enter into this union. It is also well that, prior to the marriage, the minister give Christian counsel to those entering this estate. Ministers are admonished to emphasize the need of spiritual and confessional compatibility in marriage. When husband and wife differ on the essentials of the faith their lack of harmony endangers the covenant nurture of their children and the unity of a truly Christian home.
3. Marriage is of a public nature. The welfare of civil society, the happiness of families, and the honor of the church are deeply intertwined with it. Therefore, the intent to marry should be sufficiently published previous to its solemnization. It is well that announcement of a planned wedding be made in the church of each of the two parties in each of the three weeks prior to the wedding. All ministers should take care in this matter to transgress neither the laws of God nor the laws of the state. In order that the peace and comfort of families will not be endangered and that no just objection may exist against their marriage, the parties applying should be properly certified to the minister. Moreover, the solemnization of marriage must always be performed before at least two or three witnesses.
4. Marriage is not a sacrament; nor is it peculiar to the church of Christ. For this reason, marriage ought not to be solemnized during the Lord's Day assembly for public worship, and it is best that it not be solemnized on the Lord's Day.
5. It is proper that every commonwealth, for the good of society, make laws to regulate marriage, which all citizens are bound to obey, if not contrary to Scripture.

B. Suggested Form for a Wedding Service

The following service is designed for those who are professing members, in good standing, of a faithful Christian church.

At the time and place appointed for the solemnization of marriage, the persons to be married shall take their place before the minister in the following or similar manner, the bridegroom having the bride to his left. The company may be requested to stand or be seated during the ceremony as may seem best in the circumstances.

1. Declaration of Purpose

The minister shall state the purpose of the service. He may use the following or similar words:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God and these witnesses to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony.

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57 God himself instituted marriage at the beginning in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the
58 world. He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him."
59 Thereupon God created woman of man's own substance and brought her to the man. Our Lord
60 Jesus Christ honored marriage by his presence and first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.
61 And he confirmed it as a divine ordinance and as a union not to be severed when he declared,
62 "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and
63 said, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife: and they
64 twain shall be one flesh.' Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God
65 hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Moreover, the Holy Spirit sets forth the sacred
66 and exalted nature of marriage when he likens it to the mystical union that exists between Christ
67 and his redeemed bride, the church, saying, "This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ
68 and his church."
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70 Accordingly, God has designed marriage for the enrichment of the lives of those who enter into
71 this estate, for the orderly propagation of the human race, for the generation of a holy seed, and
72 for the avoidance of sexual immorality, all to the glory of the covenant God.
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74 Husbands and wives thus have responsibilities befitting God's purposes for their relationship. The
75 Holy Scripture says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave
76 himself for [her]..." The husband is to love his wife as his own body, to care for her, and to cherish
77 her. The Holy Scripture says also, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the
78 Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is
79 the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to
80 their husbands in everything." The wife is to submit to her husband, to respect him, and to
81 entrust herself to his loving care. Both husbands and wives are to be faithful to each other, to
82 assist each other in all good things, and to heartily forgive each other their sins and shortcomings,
83 to love each other as themselves. Thus united in love, they will more and more reflect in their
84 marriage the unity of Christ and his church.
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86 Into this holy estate these two persons, M— and N—, come now to be joined.
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88 **2. Public Determination of Lawfulness**

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90 The minister may say:

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92 If anyone can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, let him now declare it, or
93 else hereafter forever hold his peace.
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95 If there is no objection, the minister may proceed, saying:

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97 I require and charge you both that, if either of you knows any cause why you may not be lawfully
98 joined together in matrimony, you do now confess it.
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100 **3. Public Declaration of Consent**

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102 Then, if no obstacle appears, the minister shall say to the man:

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104 (Man's first name), will you have this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife to live together after
105 God's ordinance in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love her as Christ loved the church
106 and gave himself for her, will you comfort her, honor and cherish her, and forsaking all others
107 keep yourself only unto her as long as you both shall live?
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109 The man shall answer:

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111 I will.
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113 Then the minister shall say to the woman:
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115 (Woman's first name), will you have this man to be your lawfully wedded husband to live together
116 after God's ordinance in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love him, comfort him, respect
117 and submit to him even as the church submits to Christ, and forsaking all others keep yourself
118 only unto him as long as you both shall live?
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120 The woman shall answer:

121 I will.
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123 **4. Public Transfer of Authority**

124 Then the minister may say:

125 Who gives this woman to be married to this man?
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127 The father of the woman, or someone in his stead, may say,

128 I do.
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130 Her father (or someone in his stead) shall place her right hand in the hand of the bridegroom, and be
131 seated.
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133 **5. Invocation**

134 The minister may pray, in these or like words:
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136 Most holy and most merciful Father, at once the God of nature and of grace, Creator, Preserver,
137 and Redeemer of mankind, fountain of life, of love, and of joy and peace, whose presence is the
138 happiness of every condition; we beseech you to be present and favorable to these, your servants,
139 and to fill them with a sense of the solemnity of the vows they are about to make. Enable them, we
140 pray, to remember and to keep these vows, looking to you for your assistance, and help them to
141 enter into these sacred obligations in humble dependence upon your enabling grace. Grant this, O
142 Father, with the forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior and Lord.
143 Amen.
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145 **6. Homily**

146 At this time it is fitting for the minister to give a brief message from the Word of God appropriate to the
147 occasion.
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149 **7. Exchange of Vows**

150 Then the bridegroom shall say (after the minister, if desired):
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152 I, M—, take you N—, to be my wedded wife, and I do promise and covenant before God and these
153 witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want,
154 in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.
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156 The bride shall say (after the minister, if desired):
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158 I, N—, take you, M—, to be my wedded husband, and I do promise and covenant before God and
159 these witnesses to be your loving and faithful wife in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want,
160 in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.
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162 **8. Exchange of Rings (if desired)**

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The minister may ask the bridegroom:

What symbol do you give as a pledge that you will faithfully perform these vows?

The bridegroom shall put a ring on the bride's left hand and say (after the minister, if desired):

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

If this is a double-ring ceremony the minister may then ask the bride:

What symbol do you give as a pledge that you will faithfully perform these vows?

The bride shall put a ring on the bridegroom's left hand and say (after the minister, if desired):

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

9. Prayer

The minister may pray in these or like words:

Most merciful and gracious God, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, we beseech you, set the seal of your approval upon the marriage into which our brother and sister have entered this day. Grant them your Fatherly blessing. Work in them the grace of your Holy Spirit. Enable them to fulfill with pure and constant affection the vow and covenant made between them. Guide them in the way of righteousness and peace, that, loving and serving you with one mind and heart all the days of their life, they may be abundantly enriched with the tokens of your everlasting favor in Christ Jesus our Lord. In all life's experiences lift up your countenance upon them, that they may be thankful in prosperity and patient in adversity. May their marriage be fruitful for this life and for the life to come. Grant them wisdom and strength to build a home that will be to the glory of your name and the coming of your kingdom. May they live together many years, and in the hour of death may they part in the blessed hope of celebrating forever with all the saints of God the marriage of Christ and the Church he loved. Hear our prayer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

10. Declaration

The minister shall say:

By virtue of the authority committed unto me as a minister of the church of Jesus Christ, I now pronounce you husband and wife, according to the ordinance of God and the law of the State; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Then joining their hands he shall pronounce:

"What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

11. Kiss

The minister may say:

You may now seal your commitment with a kiss.

The husband and wife may exchange a discreet kiss.

12. Blessing

227 The minister may say:

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

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232 **13. Presentation**

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234 The minister may then conclude the service, saying:

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236 It now gives me great pleasure to present to you, for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. (name).

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241 **II**

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243 **THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD**

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A. Guiding principles

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248 1. For the sake of convenience and pastoral care, a funeral service may be held at a time other than that
249 of burial.

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251 2. Circumstances attending specific cases differ so entirely that ministers must use their own discretion
252 as to what mode of conducting this service will most promote the honor of God and the edification of the
253 people. It should be observed that the Scriptures and the prayers in the following service have been
254 arranged with the burial of believers or their children primarily in mind. When other persons are to be
255 buried, the service should be modified accordingly. The following principles, however, should be followed
256 as general rules:

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258 (a) Care should be taken that it be evident that the ultimate goal of the service is to exalt God, not to
259 exalt man. Personal reference may have some place, but the entire service should emphasize the reading
260 of Scripture and acts of direct worship.

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262 (b) The minister should never declare the deceased to have died finally impenitent. God alone is the
263 Judge. The inference in many cases, suggested by the facts, will be plain and terrible enough.

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265 (c) The minister should always be careful not to imply, by use of Scriptures or otherwise, the
266 salvation of persons whose lives and deaths have possessed no grounds for such a hope.

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268 (d) The minister ought always to point the living to the grace of God in Christ Jesus as their sole
269 ground of confidence.

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271 3. From the reference to the minister in this service it is not to be inferred that only a minister may
272 officiate. However, it would be well if a minister of the Word, normally the deceased person's pastor, were
273 to do so.

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B. Suggested Form for the Burial of the Dead

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277 **1. The Funeral Service**

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a. Opening Scripture Sentences

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281 When the people have assembled, the minister may begin the service with several of these or other
282 appropriate sentences from the Holy Scriptures:

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

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” *Ps. 103:13, 14*

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” *Ps. 116:15*

“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” *Rom. 14:7–9*

“To live is Christ, and to die is gain ... to depart, and to be with Christ ... is far better.” *Phil. 1:21, 23*

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

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

“But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth: and after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God; whom I, even I, shall see, on my side, and mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger.” *Job 19:25-27*

“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” *Jn. 11:25, 26*

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

b. Prayer

Then the minister may lead the people in the following, or a similar, prayer, and ending, if desired, with the Lord’s Prayer.

Almighty and gracious God, our Father in heaven, you are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Lead us, we pray, to put our trust entirely in you. We come to you in the name of your only begotten and well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, who died for our sins and rose from the dead. Grant us, we beseech you, through his precious blood, peace and pardon, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And seeing that we have in him an high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, may we come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in this time of our need.

We thank you for the precious promises of your Word. We praise you for the light of the gospel. We acknowledge your sovereign will and your infinite compassion. Be pleased, therefore, to look upon our sorrow, and for the sake of your dear Son to grant us the consolation of your Holy Spirit. And we pray that you will enable us to hear your holy Word, so that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope. Grant to us, too, that we may hold fast our confidence in your forgiving mercy and the blessed assurance of eternal life. We ask these blessings of you, our Father, through him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, who rose from the dead, and who is exalted at your right hand, even Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

c. Psalm or Hymn

A psalm or hymn may then be read by the minister or sung by the people.

d. Scripture Reading from the Psalms

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Then the minister may read one or more of the following or other appropriate Psalms:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” *Ps. 23*

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.” *Ps. 27:1–5*

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.” *Ps. 90*

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” *Ps. 103:13–18*

Psalm 39:4–13 and Psalm 130 may also be found appropriate.

e. Scripture Reading Presenting the Gospel Message of Salvation

The minister may then wish to address those assembled in these or other appropriate words:

Hear now the promises of the gospel given to those who are found to be in Christ Jesus.

Then let the minister read one or more of these, or similar, passages presenting the gospel message of salvation by God’s grace in Christ:

397 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him
398 should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn
399 the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” *Jn. 3:16–17*
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401 “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find
402 pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they
403 might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good
404 shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow
405 me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck
406 them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to
407 pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” *Jn. 10:9–11, 27–30*
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409 “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by
410 whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the
411 glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh
412 patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed;
413 because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For
414 when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a
415 righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But
416 God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much
417 more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if,
418 when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being
419 reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord
420 Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” *Rom. 5:1–11*
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422 Romans 8:1–11 may also be found appropriate.
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424 **f. Scripture Reading Addressing Particular Needs** 425

426 Then, if it is deemed fitting, the minister may read one or more Scripture passages addressed to particular
427 needs.
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429 ***Selections Relating to the Death of Covenant Children*** 430

431 “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their
432 generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” *Gen.*
433 *17:7*
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435 “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the
436 Lord our God shall call.” *Acts 2:39*
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438 “Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel
439 weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.” *Jer.*
440 *31:15*
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442 “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked
443 those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them,
444 Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.
445 Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not
446 enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them.” *Mk.*
447 *10:13–16*
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449 “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their
450 angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” *Mt. 18:10*
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453 “Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should
454 perish.” *Mt. 18:14*
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456 “While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Thy
457 daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word
458 that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he
459 suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he
460 cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and
461 wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep?
462 the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.” *Mk. 5:35–39*
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464 “Jesus ... said ... Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the
465 kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little
466 child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and
467 blessed them.” *Mk. 10:14–16*
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469 “And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David
470 therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the
471 earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he
472 would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the
473 child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said,
474 Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our
475 voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that
476 his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his
477 servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and
478 washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD,
479 and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before
480 him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou
481 didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise
482 and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can
483 tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore
484 should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” *2 Sam.*
485 *12:15–23*
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487 “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” *Job. 1:21*
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490 ***Selections Relating to the Sudden Death of Youth or Middle-Aged Persons***

491 “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the
492 flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which
493 by the gospel is preached unto you.” *1 Pet. 1:24*
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496 “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” *Prov. 27:1*
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498 “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth
499 away.” *James 4:14*
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501 “[Man] knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? There is no man
502 that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and
503 there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.” *Eccl.*
504 *8:7–8*
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506 “One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. ... And another dieth in the
507 bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and
508 the worms shall cover them.” *Job 21:23–26*
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510 “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. ... for ye know not when the
511 master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest
512 coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” *Mk. 13:33–*
513 *37*

514
515 “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that
516 wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh,
517 they may open unto him immediately.” *Lk. 12:35–36*

518
519

Selections Applying to the Death of the Elderly

520
521
522 “We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and
523 if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is
524 soon cut off, and we fly away.” *Ps. 90:9–10*

525
526 “And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty
527 years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been...” *Gen. 47:9*

528
529 “The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.” *Prov. 16:31*

530
531 “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that
532 be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring
533 forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the LORD is upright: he is my
534 rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.” *Ps. 92:12–15*

535
536

Selections Concerning a Notably Useful and Fruitful Christian Life

537
538
539 “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”
540 *Prov. 4:18*

541
542 “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and
543 heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and
544 that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I
545 make up my jewels and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then
546 shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God
547 and him that serveth him not.” *Mal. 3:16–18*

548
549 “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised; and
550 let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling
551 of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more
552 as ye see the day approaching.” *Heb. 10:23–25*

553
554 “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the
555 kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave
556 me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye
557 clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the
558 righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and
559 gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or
560 when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto
561 them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my
562 brethren, ye have done it unto me.” *Mt. 25:34–40*

563
564 “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to
565 righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” *Dan. 12:3*

566

567 “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which
568 converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a
569 multitude of sins.” *James 5:19, 20*
570

571 **g. Psalm or Hymn**
572

573 Then another psalm or hymn may be read or sung.
574

575 **h. Scripture Reading Concerning the Resurrection and the Life Everlasting**
576

577 Then let the minister read one or more of these or other appropriate Scripture passages giving the gospel
578 promise of the resurrection and the life everlasting:
579

580 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by
581 man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in
582 Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward
583 they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the
584 kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and
585 power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be
586 destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put
587 under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all
588 things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all
589 things under him, that God may be all in all. But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?
590 and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it
591 die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may
592 chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to
593 every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men,
594 another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and
595 bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.
596 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for
597 one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in
598 corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a
599 natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
600 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a
601 quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and
602 afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord
603 from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are
604 they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the
605 image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom
606 of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not
607 all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump:
608 for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
609 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when
610 this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality,
611 then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death,
612 where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin
613 is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
614 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of
615 the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” *1 Cor. 15:20-28, 35-
616 58*
617

618 “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are
619 many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go
620 and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there
621 ye may be also. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall
622 give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom
623 the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he

624 dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a
 625 little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At
 626 that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. These things have I
 627 spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom
 628 the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your
 629 remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:
 630 not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
 631 *Jn. 14:1–3, 15–20, 25–27*

632
 633 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy
 634 hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an
 635 inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
 636 who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last
 637 time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through
 638 manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that
 639 perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the
 640 appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not,
 641 yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith,
 642 even the salvation of your souls.” *1 Pet. 1:3–9*

643
 644 “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed
 645 away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down
 646 from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice
 647 out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and
 648 they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall
 649 wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying,
 650 neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And I saw no temple
 651 therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of
 652 the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the
 653 light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of
 654 the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day:
 655 for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
 656 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh
 657 abomination or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” *Rev. 21:1–4,*
 658 *22–27*

659
 660 “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of
 661 God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the
 662 tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves
 663 of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of
 664 God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face;
 665 and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no
 666 candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever
 667 and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy
 668 prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold,
 669 I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” *Rev. 22:1–7*

670
 671 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–11 and Revelation 7:13–17 may also be found
 672 appropriate.

673
 674 **i. Sermon**

675
 676 If it is desired, an address may be given here. It is appropriate that it be brief and it should direct the
 677 hearers to the grace of God in Christ.

678
 679 **j. Psalm or Hymn**

680

681 Then another psalm or hymn may be read or sung.

682

683 **k. Prayer**

684

685 Then the minister may lead the people in this, or other, prayer:

686

687 Almighty and most merciful God, we come again to you in prayer, acknowledging your sovereign
688 power, and right as our Creator, both to give and to take away as seems good unto you. We
689 remember all your mercies, and your saving grace revealed to us in Christ, your Son, our
690 Redeemer. We thank you for your favor shown to our beloved friend in bringing him/her to a
691 knowledge of your redeeming love, granting him/her faith in Christ, the Savior.

692

693 We humbly pray for your bereaved servants that you will give to them meek and trustful
694 submission to your will. May they have divine comfort through joy in the presence of our risen
695 Christ and the enlightenment of your Holy Spirit. We pray that you will fill their sorrowing hearts
696 with your love, that they may wholly rest in you to bring eternal joy out of grief, and life from
697 death, through the power of your resurrected Son who now sits at the right hand of the Father,
698 interceding for us.

699

700 We pray that you will grant grace to us who remain to imitate the righteous dead in faith and in
701 loving service. Give us, we pray, perseverance to continue faithful to the end, following Christ our
702 Lord, so that we may finally be received unto heaven through his sacrifice for us and in our place,
703 and, with all your elect, adore you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.
704 Amen.

705

706

707 **2. The Interment**

708

709 **a. Scripture Sentences**

710

711 At the place of burial, if it seems desirable, let the minister say:

712

713 "I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead,
714 yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." *Jn. 11:25-26*

715

716 "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of
717 God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." *2 Cor. 5:1*

718

719 **b. Committal**

720

721 Then, if it seems desirable, earth or flowers may be scattered upon the casket, while the minister may say:

722

723 Forasmuch as it hath pleased almighty God, in his wise providence, to take out of this world the
724 soul of our brother/sister, we therefore commit (his/her) body to the ground: earth to earth, ashes
725 to ashes, dust to dust. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to
726 come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose coming in glorious majesty the earth and the sea
727 shall give up their dead; and the mortal bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and
728 made like unto his own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to
729 subdue all things unto himself.

730

731 **c. Affirmation**

732

733 Then the minister may say:

734

735 "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord
736 from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do
737 follow them." *Rev. 14:13*

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Or, if the spiritual condition of the deceased is uncertain, he may use the following or other Scripture passages:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” *Jn 3:16*

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” *Jn. 5:24*

d. Prayer

Then the minister shall offer the following, or a similar prayer:

O almighty and merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, grant that we may realize the shortness and uncertainty of human life, that we may live before you in godly fear all our days, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

We humbly beseech you to comfort the sorrowing, and to support them in their grief. Raise us up each one, we pray you, from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, so that we too, when we depart this life, may rest in Christ, and at the resurrection be found acceptable in your sight, through the mediation and merits of him who died on the cross and rose again. Amen.

As soon as the service comes to an end, the minister should move to speak a personal word of comfort to the bereaved, after which the others who have gathered will be free to do so.

III

THANKSGIVING FOR A CHURCH BUILDING

A. Guiding Principles

1. Under the gospel, the worship of God is no longer localized in a holy site on this earth. The living God is rather worshiped in spirit and in truth in the heavenly sanctuary where Christ the Mediator is. It may nevertheless be expedient to set aside a place for worship assemblies and the service of God's people. When God provides such a place, it is fitting for a congregation corporately to thank him, to ask his special blessing on its use, and to commit itself to using the place for his glory, especially for the advancement of the gospel.

2. Such thanksgiving may be given a special occasional service on the Lord's Day or another suitable time.

B. A Service of Thanksgiving for a Church Building

The session may design an appropriate service of thanksgiving for a church building which may include elements of praise, prayer, and thanksgiving. The following may be incorporated into the service along with other elements of worship as deemed appropriate.

It is fitting that psalms or hymns be sung throughout the service, that a sermon suited to the occasion be preached, and that an offering be received.

As part of the praise, prayer, and thanksgiving, the minister may say:

794
 795 Beloved in the Lord, seeing that it has pleased almighty God to prosper us in our undertaking to
 796 build (or secure) a building for his worship and service, let us therefore seek his blessing in our
 797 use of it, to the end that pure apostolic doctrine and order may be maintained herein, and that the
 798 Holy Spirit may make his own ordinances effectual in the lives of those who enter here.
 799

800 Then the minister and the people may pray antiphonally:

801
 802 O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:
 803 **For this place, we give you our thanks.**

804
 805 O eternal Son of God, Redeemer of your people and Head of your church:
 806 **For this place, we give you our thanks.**

807
 808 O Spirit of God, Lord and Giver of life, our Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter:
 809 **For this place, we give you our thanks.**

810
 811 And now, O God, we ask that you bless our use of this place.
 812 For the worship of God in praise and prayer;
 813 For the preaching of the gospel of your grace in Christ;
 814 For the celebrating of your holy sacraments:
 815 **We beseech your blessing.**

816
 817 For the dissemination of sacred knowledge;
 818 For the promotion of righteousness and holiness;
 819 For the extension of your kingdom:
 820 **We beseech your blessing.**

821
 822 For release to the captives;
 823 For recovering of sight to the blind;
 824 For rest to the heavy laden:
 825 **We beseech your blessing.**

826
 827 For comfort to those who mourn;
 828 For strength to those who are tempted;
 829 For assurance to those of little faith:
 830 **We beseech your blessing.**

831
 832 For the sanctifying of the family;
 833 For the nurturing of the young;
 834 For the perfecting of believers:
 835 **We beseech your blessing.**

836
 837 In gratitude for your gracious keeping of your covenant throughout past generations;
 838 In reliance upon your promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against your church;
 839 In the hope of the eternal glory of your church triumphant:
 840 **We beseech your blessing.**

841
 842 At an appropriate point during the service, the minister may say (in these or similar words):

843
 844 Let us pray:
 845 Almighty and everlasting God, O living and true God, Maker of heaven and earth, our God, and
 846 our Father, you dwell in the high and holy place, yet also in him who is of a contrite and humble
 847 spirit. We adore you for your manifold perfections, for the infinite majesty and glorious beauty of
 848 your being, and for the truthfulness and sanctity of your divine revelation.
 849

850 We thank you for your infinite mercies to us. In particular, we bless you for the gift of your Son,
 851 even Jesus, to be our Savior and the Savior of all who believe in him. It is in his name that we now
 852 praise you and offer our petitions before you. We praise you for your church, of which he is the
 853 only Head and King and of which we, by your grace alone, are members for all eternity. We
 854 humble ourselves before you this day, for we confess that we are not worthy to receive from your
 855 hand the blessings of not only your common grace, but even more especially, the unspeakable
 856 mercies of your saving grace in Christ Jesus. We recognize that it is by the abundance of your
 857 great grace and mercy that you have granted us faith in Jesus Christ and, through him, the
 858 forgiveness of all our sins and the assurance of our final entrance into your presence, there to join
 859 all the members of your church from all ages, that vast multitude which no one can number, from
 860 every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues. How great is your compassion.

861
 862 And now you have put it into our hearts to prepare (secure) this facility where your people may
 863 gather in your worship and service. We earnestly beseech you to watch over and protect all who
 864 serve in this place. We plead with you that here may be preached only the pure gospel of the free
 865 grace of God in Christ Jesus. May all that is proclaimed here be clearly and firmly grounded upon
 866 the unchanging foundation of your Holy Word. Grant that no part of your sacred revelation may
 867 be neglected, but that your servants who minister here shall give to the whole Scriptures that due
 868 reverence that will exhibit its breadth and majesty. We pray that by the favor and power of your
 869 Holy Spirit, you will in this place convert sinners unto you, and that you will gather, build up, and
 870 strengthen your saints through the proclamation of your matchless Word.

871
 872 And we beseech you by your Holy Spirit, you may ever be present effectually to guide, illumine,
 873 and inform those who teach here. May you prepare the hearts of the hearers to receive with
 874 meekness the instruction that is presented, and grant that their lives may show forth the triumph
 875 of your grace and adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

876
 877 In response to your mercies, O gracious God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we commit ourselves
 878 to you. Grant that we might offer ourselves to you in this congregation as one living sacrifice,
 879 consecrated to your service and to the advancement of your gospel. Grant that your grace will be
 880 mighty in us and sufficient for us so that you may keep us in this resolve. May you ever work in us
 881 both to will and to do of your own good pleasure. Please give us grace to live together in holy love,
 882 peace, purity, and unity, that you may command the blessing upon us, even life evermore. Make
 883 us conscientious in all our duties, and keep us always watchful against sin, as becomes those who
 884 know that your eye is ever upon us. Grant that we may walk in the fear of the Lord, and may the
 885 joy of the Lord be our strength.

886
 887 So bless the use of this facility, we pray, that it may ever serve the propagation of the gospel of our
 888 Lord Jesus Christ and the extension of the kingdom of God. Teach us to so look and long for the
 889 return of the Lord of glory that we may be renewed day by day in our devotion to him, and that we
 890 may be always prepared to greet him and to enter in with him to the marriage supper of the
 891 Lamb, forever to dwell in that holy city where we will need no lamp or sun, for the Lord God will
 892 be our light, and we will reign forever and ever.

893
 894 And now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for
 895 ever and ever. Amen.

896
 897 The service may be concluded with the following or another Scripture benediction:

898
 899 “The LORD bless thee and keep thee;
 900 The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;
 901 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” *Num. 6:24-26*

902
 903
 904
 905