

## LITURGICAL FORMS:

### FORM FOR THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS

#### **Doctrine of Baptism**

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ: The doctrine of holy baptism is summarized as follows:

First, we and our children are conceived and born in sin and are therefore by nature children of wrath,<sup>1</sup> so that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again.<sup>2</sup> This is what the immersion in or sprinkling with water teaches us. It signifies the impurity of our souls, so that we may detest ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek our cleansing and salvation outside of ourselves.

Second, baptism signifies and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. We are, therefore, baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

When we are baptized into the Name of the Father, God the Father testifies and seals to us that He establishes an eternal covenant of grace with us. He adopts us for His children and heirs, and promises to provide us with all good and avert all evil or turn it to our benefit.<sup>4</sup>

When we are baptized into the Name of the Son, God the Son promises us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins and unites us with Him in His death and resurrection.<sup>5</sup> Thus we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God.

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<sup>1</sup> Eph 2:3

<sup>2</sup> Jn 3:3, 5

<sup>3</sup> Mt 28:19

<sup>4</sup> Rom 8:28

<sup>5</sup> Rom 6:5

When we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit assures us by this sacrament that He will dwell in us and make us living members of Christ, imparting to us what we have in Christ, namely, the cleansing from our sins and the daily renewal of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without blemish<sup>6</sup> among the assembly of God's elect in life eternal.

Third, since every covenant contains two parts, a promise and an obligation, we are, through baptism, called and obliged by the Lord to a new obedience. We are to cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to trust Him, and to love Him with our whole heart, soul, and mind, and with all our strength.<sup>7</sup> We must not love the world<sup>8</sup> but put off our old nature<sup>9</sup> and lead a God-fearing life.<sup>10</sup> And if we sometimes through weakness fall in to sins, we must not despair of God's mercy nor continue in sin, for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.

Although our children do not understand all this, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism. Just as they share without their knowledge in the condemnation of Adam, so are they, without their knowledge, received into grace in Christ. For the LORD spoke to Abraham, the father of all believers, and thus also speaks to us and our children, saying, *I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you* (Gen 17:7).

Peter also testifies to this when he says, *The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call* (Acts 2:39). Therefore,

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<sup>6</sup> Eph 5:27

<sup>7</sup> Mt 22:37

<sup>8</sup> 1 Jn 2:15

<sup>9</sup> Eph 4:22

<sup>10</sup> Col 3:5

in the old dispensation God commanded that infants be circumcised. This circumcision was a seal of the covenant and of the righteousness of faith.<sup>11</sup> Christ also *took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them* (Mk 10:16). In the new dispensation baptism has replaced circumcision.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, infants must be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant; and as they grow up, their parents have the duty to instruct them in these things.

In order that we may now administer this holy sacrament of God to His glory, for our comfort, and to the upbuilding of the congregation, let us call upon His holy Name.

### **Prayer before Baptism**

Almighty, eternal God, in Your righteous judgment You punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, but in Your great mercy saved and protected the believer Noah and his family. You drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, but led Your people Israel through the midst of the sea on dry ground – by which baptism was signified.

We therefore pray that You, in Your infinite mercy, will graciously look upon this Your child and incorporate him (her) by Your Holy Spirit into Your Son Jesus Christ, so that he (she) may be buried with Him by baptism into death and raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

We pray that he (she), following Him day by day, may joyfully bear his (her) cross and cleave to Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love. Grant that he (she), comforted in You, may leave this life, which is no more than a constant death, and at the last day may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ Your Son.

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<sup>11</sup> Rom 4:13

<sup>12</sup> Col 2:11

All this we ask through Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who with You and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

**Address to the Parents**

Beloved in Christ the Lord:

You have heard that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord our God to seal to us and our children His covenant; we must therefore use this sacrament for that purpose and not out of custom or superstition. That it may be clear, then, that you desire baptism for the right purpose, you are to answer sincerely the following questions:

First, do you confess that our children, though conceived and born in sin, and therefore subject to all sorts of misery, even to condemnation, are sanctified in Christ and thus as members of His church ought to be baptized?

Second, do you confess that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

Third, do you promise as father and mother to instruct your child in this doctrine, as soon as he (she) is able to understand, and to have him (her) instructed therein to the utmost of your power?

What is your answer?

**Answer**

I do (to be answered by each parent).

**Baptism**

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Almighty, merciful God and Father, we thank and praise You that You have forgiven us and our children all our sins through the blood of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. You received us through Your Holy Spirit as members of Your only-begotten Son, and so adopted us to be Your children. You sealed and confirmed this to us by holy baptism.

We pray through Your beloved Son that You will always govern this child by Your Holy Spirit, that he (she) may be nurtured in the Christian faith and in godliness, and may grow and increase in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant that he (she) thus may acknowledge Your fatherly goodness and mercy, which You have shown to him (her) and to us all. May he (she) live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ, and valiantly fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion. May he (she) forever praise and magnify You and Your Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the one only true God. Amen.

### **FORM FOR THE BAPTISM OF ADULTS**

*(Those who were not baptized in their infancy, and at a later age declare that they desire Christian baptism, must first be thoroughly instructed in the essentials of the Christian doctrine. After having confessed this doctrine before the overseers, they shall be admitted to the public profession of their faith and to baptism. For the administration of their baptism the following form shall be used.)*

#### **Doctrine of Baptism**

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The doctrine of holy baptism is summarized as follows:

First, we and our children are conceived and born in sin and are therefore by nature children of wrath,<sup>1</sup> so that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again.<sup>2</sup> This is what the immersion in or sprinkling with water teaches us. It signifies the impurity of our souls, so that we may detest ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek our cleansing and salvation outside of ourselves.

Second, baptism signifies and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. We are therefore baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

When we are baptized into the Name of the Father, God the Father testifies and seals to us that He establishes an eternal covenant of grace with us. He adopts us for His children and heirs, and promises to provide us with all good and avert all evil or turn it to our benefit.<sup>4</sup>

When we are baptized into the Name of the Son, God the Son promises us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins and unites us with Him in His death and resurrection.<sup>5</sup> Thus we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God.

When we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit assures us by this sacrament that He will dwell in us and make us living members of Christ, imparting to us what we have in Christ, namely, the cleansing from our sins and the daily renewal of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without blemish<sup>6</sup> among the assembly of God's elect in life eternal.

Third, since every covenant contains two parts, a promise and an obligation, we are, through baptism, called

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<sup>1</sup> Eph 2:3

<sup>2</sup> Jn 3:3, 5

<sup>3</sup> Mt 28:19

<sup>4</sup> Rom 8:28

<sup>5</sup> Rom 6:5

<sup>6</sup> Eph 5:27

and obliged by the Lord to a new obedience. We are to cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to trust in Him, and to love Him with our whole heart, soul, and mind, and with all our strength.<sup>7</sup> We must not love the world<sup>8</sup> but put off our old nature<sup>9</sup> and lead a God-fearing life.<sup>10</sup> And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sins, we must not despair of God's mercy nor continue in sin, for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.

Although the children of believers are not able to understand these things, they must be baptized by virtue of the covenant. Adults, however, may not be baptized unless they, conscious of their sins, repent and profess their faith in Christ. For this reason John the Baptist, following the command of God, preached a *baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3), and only those who confessed their sins were baptized.<sup>11</sup> Our Lord Jesus Christ also commanded His apostles to *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 28:19), adding the promise, *whoever believes and is baptized will be saved* (Mk 16:16).

According to this rule the apostles baptized only those adults who had repented and professed their faith.<sup>12</sup> Therefore also today no other adults should be baptized than those who have learned to understand, by the preaching and instruction of the Gospel, the glorious contents of holy baptism, and are thus able to give account of their faith by personal profession.

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<sup>7</sup> Mt 22:37

<sup>8</sup> 1 Jn 2:15

<sup>9</sup> Eph 4:22

<sup>10</sup> Col 3:5

<sup>11</sup> Mk 1:5

<sup>12</sup> Acts 2:38; 8:36,37; 10:47,48; 16:14,15; 16:31,33

In order that we may now administer this holy sacrament of God to His glory, for our comfort, and to the upbuilding of the congregation, let us call upon His holy Name.

**Prayer before Baptism**

Almighty, eternal God, in Your righteous judgment You punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, but in Your great mercy saved and protected the believer Noah and his family. You drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, but led Your people Israel through the midst of the sea on dry ground – by which baptism was signified.

We therefore pray that You, in Your infinite mercy, will graciously look upon this brother (sister) and incorporate him (her) by Your Holy Spirit into Your Son Jesus Christ, so that he (she) may be buried with Him by baptism into death and raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

We pray that he (she), following Him day by day, may joyfully bear his (her) cross and cleave to Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love. Grant that he (she), comforted in You, may leave this life, which is no more than a constant death, and at the last day may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ Your Son.

All this we ask through Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who with You and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

**Public Profession of Faith**

Beloved brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_, you desire to receive holy baptism as a seal of your incorporation into the church of God. You have been instructed by us in the Christian religion and have made profession of it before the overseers. It must become clear to all that you not only accept the Christian doctrine, but also intend, by the grace of God, to live according to it. Therefore, we ask you to



answer sincerely the following questions before God and His church:

First, do you believe in the one and only true God, distinct in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has created of nothing heaven and earth, with all that is in them, and still upholds and governs them, so that nothing happens without His divine will?

Second, do you believe that you were conceived and born in sin and are therefore by nature a child of wrath, totally unable to do any good and inclined to all evil? Do you confess that you have often transgressed the commandments of the Lord in thought, word, and deed, and do you sincerely repent of these your sins?

Third, do you believe that Jesus Christ, who is both true and eternal God and true man, who assumed His human nature from the virgin Mary, is given by God as your Saviour? Believing in Him, do you confess that you receive the remission of sins in His blood and that by the power of the Holy Spirit you have become a member of Jesus Christ and His church?

Fourth, do you wholeheartedly agree with the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church? Do you promise to continue steadfastly in this doctrine to the end of your life, and do you reject all heresies and errors conflicting with this doctrine? Do you promise to persevere in the fellowship of this Christian church and be diligent in the hearing of the Word of God and in the use of the holy sacraments?

Fifth, do you firmly resolve, as is proper for a member of Christ and His church, always to lead a Christian life and not to love the world and its evil desires? Do you promise to submit willingly to the Christian admonition and discipline of the church, if it should happen, and may God graciously prevent it, that you become delinquent either in doctrine or in conduct?

\_\_\_\_\_, what is your answer?

**Answer**

I do.

Our merciful God grant you His grace and blessing to fulfil this your holy intention through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Baptism**

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Almighty, merciful God and Father, we thank and praise You that You have forgiven us and our children all our sins through the blood of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. You received us through Your Holy Spirit as members of Your only-begotten Son, and so adopted us to be Your children. You sealed and confirmed this to us by holy baptism.

We pray through Your beloved Son that You will always govern this brother (sister) by Your Holy Spirit, that he (she) may live a truly Christian and godly life and grow in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant that he (she) may acknowledge Your fatherly goodness and mercy, which You have shown to him (her) and to us all. May he (she) live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ, and valiantly fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion. May he (she) forever praise and magnify You and Your Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the one only true God. Amen.

## **FORM FOR THE PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH**

### **Address**

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ:

We thank the Lord our God for the grace given us by adopting us to be His children and receiving us into His covenant. We acknowledge His love and power, by which He instills in His children the desire publicly to profess their faith in Him in the presence of His holy church, so that they may receive admission to the holy supper.

### **Profession**

Since you have now come here to make this profession before God and His holy church, and hereby to receive admission to the holy supper, we ask you to answer sincerely to the following questions:

First, do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church? Do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this doctrine in life and death, rejecting all heresies and errors conflicting with God's Word?

Second, do you acknowledge God's covenant promises, which have been signified and sealed to you in your baptism? Do you truly detest and humble yourself before God because of your sins and seek your life outside of yourself in Jesus Christ?

Third, do you declare that you love the Lord God and that it is your heartfelt desire to serve Him according to His Word, to forsake the world, and to crucify your old nature?

Fourth, do you firmly resolve to commit your whole life to the Lord's service as a living member of His church? Do you promise to submit willingly to the admonition and discipline of the church, if it should happen, and may God graciously prevent it, that you become delinquent either in doctrine or in conduct?

\_\_\_\_\_, what is your answer?

**Answer**

I do.

*The God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet 5:10, 11).*

**FORM FOR THE CELEBRATION  
OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

**Institution**

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ:

The holy supper has been instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to the words of this institution as described by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29: *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

In order that we may now celebrate this holy supper of the Lord to our comfort, we must first rightly examine

ourselves. Further, we must use it as Christ intended it, namely, to His remembrance.

### **Self-examination**

True self-examination consists of the following three parts:

First, let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, detesting himself, may humble himself before God. For the wrath of God against sin is so great that He could not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in His beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross.

Second, let everyone search his heart whether he also believes the sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is freely given him as his own, as if he himself had fulfilled all righteousness.

Third, let everyone examine his conscience whether it is his sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity.

### **Invitation and Admonition**

God will certainly receive in grace all who are thus minded and count them worthy to partake of the supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts, eat and drink judgment upon themselves. Therefore, according to the command of Christ and of the apostle Paul, we admonish all those who know themselves to be guilty of the following offensive sins to abstain from the table of the Lord, and we declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ:<sup>1</sup> all who refuse to trust in the

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 6:9, 10

LORD alone or who serve Him in their own manner; all who abuse the Name of the LORD by cursing or in any other way; all who do not diligently attend the worship services and who despise the proclamation of God's Word or the sanctity of the sacraments; all who are disobedient to their parents or to others in authority over them; all who violate human life or cherish hatred against their neighbour and refuse to be reconciled to him; all who, either within or outside of holy wedlock, do not keep their bodies pure; all who by stealing, greed, or extravagance, lead a worldly life; all liars, backbiters, and slanderers; briefly, all who either in word or conduct show themselves to be unbelieving by leading an offensive life. While they persist in their sins, they shall not take of this food, which Christ has ordained only for His believers; otherwise their judgment and condemnation will be the heavier.

But all this, beloved brothers and sisters, is not meant to discourage broken and contrite hearts,<sup>2</sup> as if only those who are without sin may come to the table of the Lord. For we do not come to this supper to declare that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves. On the contrary, we seek our life outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ and, in doing so, we acknowledge that we are dead in ourselves. We also are aware of our many sins and shortcomings. We do not have perfect faith and we do not serve God with such zeal as He requires. Daily we have to contend with the weakness of our faith and with the evil desires of our flesh. Yet, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are heartily sorry for these shortcomings and desire to fight against our unbelief and to live according to all the commandments of God. Therefore we may be fully assured that no sin or weakness which still remains in us against our will can prevent us from being received by God in grace and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly food and drink.

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<sup>2</sup> Ps 51:17

## Remembrance of Christ

Let us now consider for what purpose the Lord has instituted His supper; namely, that we should use it in remembrance of Him. We are to remember Him in the following manner:

First of all, let us fully trust that the Lord Jesus Christ was sent by the Father into this world, according to the promises made from the beginning to the fathers in the Old Testament, and that He assumed our flesh and blood.

From the beginning of His incarnation to the end of His life on earth, He bore for us the wrath of God, under which we should have perished eternally. By His perfect obedience He has for us fulfilled all the righteousness of God's law. We remember in particular that the weight of the wrath of God caused by our sins pressed out of Him sweat like drops of blood falling on the ground in the garden of Gethsemane.<sup>3</sup> There He was bound that He might free us from our sins. He suffered countless insults that we might never be put to shame. Though innocent He was condemned to death that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God. He even let His blessed body be nailed to the cross that He might cancel the bond which stood against us because of our sins.<sup>4</sup> By all this He has taken our curse upon Himself that He might fill us with His blessing.<sup>5</sup> On the cross He humbled Himself, in body and soul, to the very deepest shame and anguish of hell. Then He called out with a loud voice, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* (Mt 27:46) that we might be accepted by God and nevermore be forsaken by Him. Finally, by His death and the shedding of His blood, He confirmed the new and eternal testament, the covenant of grace, when He said, *It is finished* (Jn 19:30).

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<sup>3</sup> Lk 22:44

<sup>4</sup> Col 2:14

<sup>5</sup> Gal 3:13, 14

### **Assurance**

In order that we might firmly believe that we belong to this covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ during His last Passover instituted the holy supper. He gave the bread and the cup to His disciples in remembrance of Him,<sup>6</sup> and He declared, saying: As often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you are reminded and assured of My hearty love and faithfulness towards you. It is a sure pledge that I have given My body and shed My blood for you; otherwise you would have suffered eternal death. I nourish and refresh your hungry and thirsty souls with My crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life as certainly as this bread is broken before your eyes and this cup is given to you and you eat and drink in remembrance of Me.

From this institution of the holy supper of our Lord Jesus Christ we learn that He directs our faith and trust to His perfect sacrifice,<sup>7</sup> once offered on the cross. It is the only ground for our salvation. Thereby He has become to our hungry and thirsty souls the true food and drink of life eternal. For by His death He has removed the cause of our eternal hunger and misery, which is sin, and obtained for us the life-giving Spirit.<sup>8</sup> By this Spirit, who dwells in Christ as the Head and in us as His members, we have true communion with Him and share in all His riches, life eternal, righteousness, and glory.

### **Fellowship**

By the same Spirit we are also united in true brotherly love as members of one body. For the apostle Paul says, *Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf* (1 Cor 10:17). As one bread is baked out of many grains and one wine is pressed

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<sup>6</sup> Lk 22:19, 20

<sup>7</sup> Heb 9:12

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:33; Rom 8:11



out of many grapes, so we all, incorporated in Christ by faith, are together one body. For the sake of Christ, who so exceedingly loved us first, we shall now love one another,<sup>9</sup> and shall show this to one another not just in words but also in deeds.

### **Expectation of Christ's Coming**

Finally, Christ has commanded us to celebrate the holy supper until He comes. We receive at His table a foretaste of the abundant joy which He has promised and look forward to the marriage feast of the Lamb, when He will drink the wine new with us in the kingdom of His Father.<sup>10</sup> Let us rejoice and give Him the glory, for the marriage feast of the Lamb is coming!<sup>11</sup>

May the almighty, heavenly God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ help us in this through His Holy Spirit. Amen.

To receive all this, let us now humble ourselves before God in prayer and call upon Him in true faith.

### **Prayer**

Merciful God and Father, we thank You that in this supper we cherish the blessed memory of the bitter death of Your dear Son Jesus Christ. Work in our hearts through the Holy Spirit so that we may entrust ourselves more and more to Your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that our contrite hearts may be nourished with His true body and blood, yes, with Him who is the only heavenly bread, that we may not live in our sins, but Christ in us and we in Him.

Let us so truly be partakers of the new and everlasting testament, the covenant of grace, that we do not doubt that You will forever be our gracious Father, nevermore

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Jn 4:10, 11, 19

<sup>10</sup> Mk 14:25

<sup>11</sup> Rev 19:7

imputing to us our sins but providing us with all things for body and soul as Your dear children and heirs.

Grant us Your grace that we may take up our cross joyfully, deny ourselves, and confess our Saviour. Let us in all tribulation await our Lord Jesus Christ, who will come from heaven to change our mortal body to be like His glorious body and take us to Himself forever.

Hear us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Or: . . . through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray,  
*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,  
for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen)*

### **Profession of Faith**

Let us now profess our catholic, undoubted Christian faith. (The Apostles' Creed may be recited by the minister, said in unison, or sung by the congregation.)

### **Exhortation**

Brothers and sisters, in order that we may now be nourished with Christ, the true heavenly bread, we must not cling with our hearts to the outward symbols of bread and wine, but lift our hearts on high in heaven, where Christ, our advocate, is, at the right hand of His heavenly Father.<sup>12</sup> Let us not doubt that we shall be nourished and refreshed in our souls with His body and blood, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as truly as we receive the holy bread and

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<sup>12</sup> Rom 8:34

drink in remembrance of Him.

### **Communion**

(When he breaks the bread, the minister shall say:)

The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

(And when he gives the cup:)

The cup of blessing, for which we give thanks, is the communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink from it, all of you, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

(During the communion some suitable portion of Scripture may be read and a Psalm or hymn be sung.)

### **Doxology**

(After the communion, the minister shall say:)

Beloved in the Lord, since the Lord has now nourished our souls at His table, let us together praise His holy Name. Let everyone say in his heart:

*Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion (Ps 103:1-4).*

*The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father*

*has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him (Ps 103:8-13).*

*He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? (Rom 8:32)*

*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! (Rom 5:8-10)*

Therefore my heart and my mouth shall proclaim the praise of the Lord, from now on and for evermore. Amen.

### **Thanksgiving**

Merciful God and Father, we thank You that in Your boundless mercy You have given us Your only-begotten Son as our Mediator. We praise You that He is the sacrifice for our sins and our food and drink to life eternal.

We thank You that You give us a true faith, through which we may share in such great benefits.

Through Your Son You have instituted the holy supper for the strengthening of our faith. We earnestly ask You, faithful God and Father, that by Your Holy Spirit this celebration may lead to our daily increase in true faith and fellowship with Christ, Your beloved Son.

In His Name we pray. Amen.

### **ABBREVIATED FORM FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (For the Second Service)**

#### **Institution**

Brothers and sisters:

The apostle Paul describes the institution of the holy supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29: *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, " This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

### **Self-examination**

If we are to celebrate the holy supper for the strengthening of our faith, we must first examine ourselves.

Let everyone consider his sins and accursedness that he may humble himself before God.

Let everyone examine his heart whether he believes the sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is freely given him as his own.

Finally, let everyone determine whether he intends gratefully to serve the Lord with his entire life and to live in true love and harmony with his neighbour.

### **Invitation and Admonition**

All who by the grace of God repent of their sins, desire to fight against their unbelief and live according to God's commandments, will certainly be received by God at the

table of His Son Jesus Christ. They may be fully assured that no sin or weakness which still remains in them against their will shall keep God from accepting them in grace and granting them this heavenly food and drink.

But to all who do not truly grieve over their sins and do not repent from them, we declare that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ. We admonish them to abstain from the holy supper; otherwise their judgment will be the heavier.

### **Remembrance of Christ**

Christ has commanded us to use this supper in remembrance of Him. At this table we remember that our Lord was sent by the Father into the world, assumed our flesh and blood, and from the beginning to the end of His life bore for us the wrath of God. He was bound that we might be set free. Though innocent He was condemned to death that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God. He let His blessed body be nailed to the cross and so took our curse upon Himself to fill us with His blessing. He was forsaken by God that we might nevermore be forsaken by Him. By His death and the shedding of His blood He confirmed the new and everlasting covenant of grace when He said, *It is finished* (Jn 19:30).

### **Assurance**

Therefore, as often as we eat this bread and drink of this cup, we are reminded and assured of Christ's hearty love towards us. He died on the cross and shed His blood for us that He might feed our hungry and thirsty souls unto eternal life with His crucified body and shed blood, as truly as we receive this bread and drink in remembrance of Him.

### **Fellowship**

By His suffering and death Christ has obtained for us the Spirit of life. By this Spirit we are united with Him and

receive all His gifts. The same Spirit unites us in brotherly love as members of one body.<sup>1</sup> Therefore we all, incorporated into Christ by true faith, are one body and shall show this to one another not just in words but also in deeds.

### **Expectation of Christ's Coming**

Finally, Christ has commanded us to celebrate the holy supper until He comes. We receive at His table a foretaste of the abundant joy which He has promised and look forward to the marriage feast of the Lamb, when He will drink the wine new with us in the kingdom of His Father.

Let us rejoice and give Him the glory, for the marriage feast of the Lamb is coming!<sup>2</sup>

Let us pray.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God and Father, we thank You that You have given us Your only Son as a sacrifice for our sins and as our food and drink unto eternal life.

We pray, work in our hearts by Your Holy Spirit through this supper so that, entrusting ourselves more and more to Your Son Jesus Christ, we may not live in our sins, but He in us and we in Him. Strengthen our faith that You will forever be our gracious Father, who gives us all things necessary for body and soul. Grant us Your grace that we may joyfully take up our cross, deny ourselves, and confess our Saviour.

Teach us to expect our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, who will change our mortal body to be like His glorious body and take us to Himself in eternity. Amen.

### **Exhortation**

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 10:17

<sup>2</sup> Rev 19:7

In order to be nourished with Christ, the true heavenly bread, let us not cling to the outward symbols of bread and wine, but lift up our hearts to Jesus Christ, our advocate at the Father's right hand.

Let us firmly believe that we will be nourished with His body and blood as certainly as we receive this bread and drink in remembrance of Him.

### **Communion**

(When he breaks the bread, the minister shall say:)

The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (And when he gives the cup:)

The cup of blessing, for which we give thanks, is the communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink from it, all of you, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

(During the communion some suitable portion of Scripture may be read and a Psalm or hymn be sung.)

### **Doxology**

(After the communion, the minister shall say:)

Beloved in the Lord, now that the Lord has nourished us at His table, let us together praise His Name with thanksgiving.

*Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion (Ps 103:1-4).*

*The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins*



*deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him (Ps 103:8-14).*

Therefore my heart and my mouth shall proclaim the praise of the Lord, from now on and for evermore. Amen.

### **Thanksgiving**

Merciful God and Father, we thank You for the opportunity to partake of the supper of Your Son Jesus Christ, by eating of the bread and drinking of the cup, and so proclaiming the death of our Lord as the only ground of our salvation.

We praise You that You give us the privilege to rejoice in the communion of Your Son, as well as in the fellowship with one another.

We also earnestly ask You that we, being strengthened in faith by the celebration of this sacrament, may bring forth fruits of thankfulness.

Cause us to show in our whole life our heartfelt love towards You and towards each other.

Grant that with ardent expectation we may await the return of our Saviour, who promised that He would drink with us of the fruit of the vine in the kingdom of His Father.

To You, Father, be all glory, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

## **FORM FOR THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF NON-COMMUNICANT MEMBERS**

**First Announcement**

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory has the sad duty of informing the congregation that a brother (sister), by baptism incorporated into the Christian church, is guilty of sin against the . . . commandment and that he (she), in spite of many earnest admonitions, did not show evidence of true repentance. Therefore the consistory, to its great sorrow, is obliged to deal further with this brother (sister), and, if he (she) persists in his (her) sin, to proceed to his (her) excommunication. The consistory is making this known to you for the first time and seriously exhorts you to pray for him (her) continually, that it might please the Lord to bring him (her) to repentance.

**Second Announcement**

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory, having taken the advice of classis, has the sad duty of informing the congregation that \_\_\_\_\_, by baptism incorporated into the Christian church, in spite of continual earnest admonitions, obstinately persists in sinning against the . . . commandment. Unless he (she) within . . . shows repentance and amendment of life, the consistory will be obliged to exclude this brother (sister) from the communion of the church because of his (her) wilful disobedience to the covenant of God. The congregation is exhorted to admonish this member with affection and to pray the Lord for his (her) conversion.

**The Excommunication**

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory previously had the sad duty of informing the congregation that \_\_\_\_\_, by baptism incorporated into the Christian church, in spite of continual earnest admonitions, obstinately persisted in sinning against the . . . commandment, and that the consistory would be obliged to

exclude this brother (sister) from the communion of the church, unless he (she) showed repentance and amendment of life.

The consistory must now inform the congregation that \_\_\_\_\_, in spite of many earnest admonitions, obstinately denies the communion with Christ and His church, which was signified and sealed to him (her) in holy baptism.

Therefore, we as the elders of the church of God in this place, assembled in the Name and authority of Jesus Christ our Lord, declare before you all that for these reasons we hereby excommunicate \_\_\_\_\_ from the church of the Lord and that, as long as he (she) persists obstinately and impenitently in his (her) sins, he (she) is excluded from the fellowship of Christ and all the spiritual blessings and benefits which God promises to and bestows upon His church; and that he (she) is therefore to be accounted by you as a Gentile and an outcast, according to the command of Christ, who says that whatever His ministers shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Further we exhort you, beloved Christians, not to associate with him (her), that he (she) may be ashamed. Do not look on him (her) as an enemy but warn him (her) as a brother (sister).<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, departing from the living God.<sup>3</sup> *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:1-4). Young*

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 18:17,18

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess 3:14,15

<sup>3</sup> Heb 3:12

*men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older (1 Pet 5:5).*

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful men, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1 Jn 2:15-17).*

But since it is God who works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure,<sup>4</sup> let us call upon His holy Name with confession of our sins.

### **Prayer**

Righteous God and merciful Father, before Your holy majesty we accuse ourselves because of our sins. We acknowledge that we have deserved the sorrow and grief caused by the excommunication of our brother (sister). Yes, we all are worthy to be excluded from Your presence because of our many transgressions.

But, O Lord, be gracious to us for Christ's sake. We repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness. Work in us by Your Spirit, so that we may endeavour to serve You more and more. Grant that we may shun pollution by the world and by those who have strayed from You.

Grant that the excluded member may become ashamed of his (her) sins and return to You, for You have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Therefore we, Your people, will always welcome those who return to You. Kindle in our hearts love and zeal that, by our admonitions as well as by our example, this excommunicated brother (sister) and others who live in unbelief may be brought back to You.

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<sup>4</sup> Phil 2:13

Bless our endeavours, that we may have reason to rejoice again over him (her) for whom we now must mourn, so that in this way Your holy Name be praised, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Or: . . . through our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray,

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,  
for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen)*

## **FORM FOR THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF COMMUNICANT MEMBERS**

### **First Announcement**

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory informs you with sorrow, that a brother (sister) of the congregation has become guilty of sin against the . . . commandment. In spite of several earnest admonitions, there is no evidence of repentance. Therefore the consistory had to suspend him (her) from the communion of the table of the Lord. However, this did not lead to repentance. Continuing admonitions also proved fruitless. To its great sorrow the consistory is now obliged to exercise further discipline, and will have to proceed to the excommunication of this brother (sister) if he (she) persists in his (her) sin. We make this known to you for the

first time, and seriously exhort you to pray the Lord that He may bring this member of the body to repentance.

### **Second Announcement**

Beloved in the Lord:

With sorrow the consistory has informed you previously that a brother (sister) has become guilty of sin against the ... commandment. You then heard that he (she) was suspended from the holy supper because he (she) refused to repent. In spite of continued discipline no true repentance has become apparent. On the contrary, all admonitions remained fruitless. The only result was a further hardening of heart. We have asked the advice of classis and now inform you with sorrow that we will proceed with the excommunication. We seriously exhort you to admonish this sinner continually in love. His (Her) name and address are \_\_\_\_\_. Pray the Lord that He may bring this brother (sister) to repentance, that this sin may be banned from the congregation and the sinner be saved.

### **Third Announcement**

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory had the sad duty to inform you already twice that brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_ has become guilty of sinning against the ... commandment. You also heard that he (she) refused to repent and further hardened his (her) heart, so that he (she) had to be suspended from the holy supper. Yet, no true repentance was shown. On the contrary, all admonitions remained fruitless. Therefore, to our great sorrow, we now inform you for the third time that we have to deal further with this brother (sister). If he (she) does not come to repentance, he (she) will be excluded from the communion of the church of Christ on ... For the last time we call upon you to admonish him (her) most urgently and in love. Pray the Lord that it may please Him

to lead this brother (sister) to repentance, so that he (she) may not harden himself (herself) to the utmost.

### **The Excommunication**

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

The consistory has informed you that brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_ has persisted in a life of sin. The purpose of these announcements was that by your prayers and admonitions he (she) might turn to the living God and thus be delivered from the power of Satan, who has taken him (her) captive. But, to our deep sorrow, no one has informed us of the least evidence of true repentance, although he (she) was warned by many. His (Her) guilt, which was already serious, has only become all the heavier because of his (her) persistence in sin. We have shown much patience with him (her), but now we know ourselves bound to proceed to the ultimate remedy given us by the Lord in His Word, namely, exclusion from the communion of His church. This excommunication is intended to make this brother (sister) ashamed of his (her) sins, and also to ensure that this corrupt member does not affect the whole body which is Christ's church. Moreover, in this way the blaspheming of God's Name is prevented. Christ Jesus has assigned the exercise of discipline to His office-bearers with the words, *I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven* (Mt 18:18).

Therefore we, as the elders of the church of God in this place, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ excommunicate \_\_\_\_\_ from the church of the Lord, because he (she) obstinately persists in his (her) sin.

He (she) is now excluded from the fellowship of Christ and from His kingdom. He (she) may no longer use the sacraments. He (she) has no part any more in the spiritual blessings and benefits which Christ bestows upon His

church. As long as he (she) persists in sin, let him (her) be to you as a Gentile and an outcast.<sup>1</sup>

### **Warning to the Congregation**

We exhort you, beloved Christians, not to look on him (her) as an enemy. On the contrary, try to warn him (her) as a brother (sister). But do not associate with him (her), that he (she) may be ashamed and come to repentance.<sup>2</sup>

This excommunication, beloved, is a warning for us all. Let us fear the Lord and be cautious, for he who thinks he stands must take heed lest he fall.<sup>3</sup> Continue in the true fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and also with all upright believers, so that we may obtain eternal salvation.

You have seen in what manner our excommunicated brother (sister) has lost the way: how he (she) began to fall and gradually came to ruin. Learn from this how subtle Satan is in bringing man to destruction,<sup>4</sup> and how he causes him to despise God's Word and His sacraments.

Therefore, resist evil from the very beginning. *Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith* (Heb 12:1, 2).

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour* (1 Pet 5:8).

*Pray so that you will not fall into temptation* (Lk 22:46).

*Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts* (Heb 4:7).

*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil 2:12). Let everyone repent of his sins lest

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 18:17

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess 3:14,15

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor 10:12

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor 2:11



our God humble us again and we have to grieve for another member of the body. Live with one accord in godliness; be our crown and joy in the Lord.

Only the Lord, *who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose* (Phil 2:13), is able to keep us in the way of His commandments.

Let us, therefore, call upon His holy Name with confession of our sins.

### **Prayer**

Righteous God and merciful Father, before Your holy majesty we accuse ourselves because of our sins. We acknowledge that we have deserved the sorrow and grief caused by the excommunication of our brother (sister). Yes, we all are worthy to be excluded from Your presence because of our many transgressions.

But, O Lord, be gracious to us for Christ's sake. We repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness. Work in us by Your Spirit, so that we may endeavour to serve You more and more. Grant that we may shun pollution by the world and by those who have strayed from You.

Grant that the excluded member may become ashamed of his (her) sins and return to You, for You have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Therefore we, Your people, will always welcome those who return to You. Kindle in our hearts love and zeal that, by our admonitions as well as by our example, this excommunicated brother (sister) and others who live in unbelief may be brought back to You.

Bless our endeavours, that we may have reason to rejoice again over him (her) for whom we now must mourn, so that in this way Your holy Name be praised, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Or: . . . through our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray,

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil  
one,  
for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory  
forever. Amen)*

## **FORM FOR READMISSION INTO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

### **Announcement**

Beloved in the Lord:

In the year . . . brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_, was excommunicated from the church of Christ. The consistory may now inform you with gratitude that this remedy has borne fruit. The Lord has blessed our admonitions and prayers, so that \_\_\_\_\_ has repented and has requested to be received again into the communion of the church.

It is the gracious will of God that we receive penitent sinners with joy.

Since all things have to be done in good order,<sup>1</sup> we inform you that at the next celebration of the holy supper we shall loose this man (woman) from the bond of excommunication and readmit him (her) to the fellowship of the saints.

If any of you should have valid reason against such readmission, he should give notice to the consistory within . . . week(s). Meanwhile let us thank the Lord, who has

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 14:40

shown favour to this lost sheep, and let us beseech Him to perfect His work of conversion to eternal salvation.

(If no lawful objection has been brought forward, the readmission shall take place with the following form.)

### **Readmission According to the Scriptures**

Beloved Christians:

We have recently informed you of the conversion of \_\_\_\_\_, to the end that, with your approbation, he (she) might be received again into the church of God. No one has brought forward any objection against this readmission, and therefore we will now receive him (her) again into the communion of saints.

The Lord Christ instructed His church to excommunicate impenitent sinners and said, *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.* But He immediately added, *And whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven* (Mt 18:18).

He taught us that excommunication does not take away all hope of salvation. For God has sworn by Himself, saying, *As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live* (Ezek 33:11). Therefore the church keeps hoping and praying for the repentance and return of the lost sinner, always eager to receive the penitent. The apostle Paul commanded the congregation at Corinth to forgive and comfort the brother who had been reprovved and had come to repentance. He exhorted them to reaffirm their love for him lest he should be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.<sup>2</sup>

Christ also teaches us that the sentence of absolution, passed upon a repentant sinner according to the Word of God, is counted binding by the Lord. *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on*

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor 2:5-7

*earth will be loosed in heaven* (Mt 16:19). For this reason no one who truly repents needs to doubt in the least that he is certainly received by God in grace, as Christ has declared, saying: *If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven* (Jn 20:23).

### **Questions**

Before we proceed to the act of loosing the bond of excommunication and readmit you, \_\_\_\_\_, to the church of Christ, we request you to answer the following questions.

\_\_\_\_\_, do you declare with all your heart, here before God and His church, that you are sincerely sorry for the sin and stubbornness on account of which you were justly excluded from the church? Do you also truly believe that God has forgiven all your sins for the sake of Christ's blood and now receives you in grace?

Do you, therefore, desire to be readmitted to the church of Christ and do you promise, by the grace of the Lord, to live from now on in all godliness according to the Word of God?

### **Answer**

I do.

### **Readmission**

Assembled in the Name and authority of Christ Jesus, we as the elders of the church of God in this place, absolve you, \_\_\_\_\_, from the bond of excommunication. We receive you again into the church of the Lord with joy and gratitude, and declare that you share in the fellowship of Christ, of the holy sacraments, and of all spiritual gifts and blessings of our Saviour which God promises to and bestows upon His church. May the eternal God preserve you in this grace to the end, through His only Son Jesus

Christ. *The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it* (1 Thess 5:24). Amen.

### **Charge**

Beloved brother (sister), be assured in your heart that the Lord Himself has received you in grace. Be diligent to guard yourself against the subtleties of Satan, the wickedness of the world, and the fallacies of the flesh, lest you again become entangled in sin. The love of Christ has brought you back; love Him, for He has forgiven you much. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit again, who has promised in your baptism to dwell in you and to sanctify you to be a member of Christ.

Beloved Christians, receive this brother (sister) in love. Rejoice and be thankful, for this brother (sister) was dead and is alive; he (she) was lost and is found.<sup>3</sup> Rejoice with the angels, for Christ said, *I tell you that in the same way there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine persons who do not need to repent* (Lk 15:7). Look on him (her) no longer as a stranger but as a fellow citizen with the saints and a member of the household of God.<sup>4</sup>

Since there is no good in ourselves, let us, with praise and thanksgiving, implore the Lord Almighty for His grace.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God and Father, we thank and praise You through Jesus Christ that You have granted this brother (sister) godly grief and repentance unto life and have caused us to rejoice in this.

We pray, show him (her) Your grace, that he (she) may become more and more assured of the complete remission

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<sup>3</sup> Lk 15:32

<sup>4</sup> Eph 2:19

of all sins, and may derive from that assurance unspeakable joy and delight to serve You.

Since for a time he (she) has grieved many by his (her) sins, grant that he (she) now may edify many by his (her) conversion. Grant that he (she) may walk steadfastly in Your ways till the end.

Teach us, Father, by this example that with You there is forgiveness, that You may be praised. Grant that we now with our brother (sister) may together serve You with childlike fear and obedience all the days of our life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with You and the Holy Spirit is the one only true God. Amen.

(Or: . . . through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose Name we conclude our prayer:

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,  
for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen)*

### **FORM FOR THE ORDINATION (OR INSTALLATION) OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD**

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ:

The consistory has now twice published the name of our brother \_\_\_\_\_, to learn if anyone had objections against his ordination to the ministry of the Word (or: installation as minister in this church). Since no one has brought forward anything lawful against his doctrine and

life, we will now in the Name of the Lord proceed to his ordination (or: installation).

Let us first hear what Holy Scripture teaches about the office of ministers of the Word.

### **Institution by Christ**

The exalted Christ gathers His church through His Word and Spirit, and in His grace uses the ministry of man. The apostle Paul indicates this when he says, *It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teacher, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up* (Eph 4:11, 12). As the Chief Shepherd, who unceasingly cares for His flock,<sup>1</sup> He appoints shepherds to take heed to the flock in His Name. They are to take care of the sheep of Christ by means of the proclamation of the Word, by the administration of the sacraments, and by prayers and pastoral supervision. In this way the flock is tended and led in the right paths.

In the early Christian church this task was fulfilled by the apostles.<sup>2</sup> They, in turn, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, appointed elders in every church. According to 1 Timothy 5:17 there were elders who ruled the congregation. Some of them were also called to labour in preaching and teaching. The latter are now called ministers of the Word. They have received the ministry of reconciliation, of which Paul speaks, saying, *All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet 5:4

<sup>2</sup> Acts 6:4

*implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-20).*

### **Duties of the Minister**

The task of the minister of the Word can be described as follows:

First, he must declare the whole counsel of God<sup>3</sup> to his congregation, proclaiming the Word according to the command of the apostle Paul: *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction (2 Tim 4:1, 2).* After the example of the apostle he is to perform this duty in public and from house to house.<sup>4</sup> He shall expose all errors and heresies as unfruitful works of darkness, and exhort the membership to walk as children of the light. He shall teach the Word of God to the youth of the church and to others whom God calls, for the Holy Scriptures are able to instruct them for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> It is also his duty to visit the members of the congregation and to comfort the sick and sorrowing. Thus comforting and admonishing, he shall call the whole congregation to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Second, he is called to administer the sacraments, because Christ has joined this administration to the preaching of the gospel. It is therefore the duty of the minister of the Word to administer holy baptism according to the command of Christ, *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19).* He also is to

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<sup>3</sup> Acts 20:27

<sup>4</sup> Acts 20:20

<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim 3:15



administer the holy supper as instituted by Christ when He said, *Do this in remembrance of Me* (1 Cor 11:24).

Third, it is his duty as pastor and teacher of the congregation to call upon the Name of the Lord in public worship, *with requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving* (1 Tim 2:1, 2).

Fourth, it is the duty of the minister of the Word, with the elders as stewards of the house of God, to see to it that in the congregation all things are done in peace and good order.<sup>6</sup> Together they shall supervise the doctrine and life of the membership, as the apostle Peter said: *Be shepherds of God's flock, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock* (1 Pet 5:2, 3). In so doing they are to shut and open the kingdom of God by Christian discipline, according to the charge given them by Christ. From all this we see what glorious work the ministers of the Word may perform. When the Chief Shepherd is manifested they as faithful servants will obtain the unfading crown of glory.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Ordination (or: Installation)**

Beloved brother \_\_\_\_\_, you are now about to enter upon your office. We ask you to answer the following questions before God and His holy church.

First, do you feel in your heart that God Himself, through His congregation, has called you to this holy ministry?

Second, do you believe the Old and the New Testament to be the only Word of God and the complete doctrine of salvation? Do you reject all doctrines conflicting with it?

Third, do you promise faithfully to discharge the duties of your office and to adorn the doctrine of God with a godly life? Do you also promise to submit to the discipline of the

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor 14:33

<sup>7</sup> 1 Pet 5:4

church in case you should become delinquent in doctrine or life?

What is your answer?

**Answer**

I do.

**Laying on of Hands \***

God, our heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy office, enlighten you with His Spirit and so govern you in your ministry that you may fulfil it obediently and that it may bear fruit to the honour of His Name and the expansion of the kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Charge to the Minister**

Beloved brother in Christ, God our Father has obtained the church for Himself with the blood of His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has made you pastor and teacher of this congregation. Love Christ, feed His lambs and tend His sheep,<sup>8</sup> *not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be* (1 Pet 5:2). Keep watch over yourself; *set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity* (1 Tim 4:12). Preach the pure doctrine, so that by your preaching and teaching the congregation may be kept in obedience to the Word of God. *Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus* (2 Tim 2:3). *Do not neglect your gift* (1 Tim 4:14), with which the Lord has endowed you for this ministry. Devote yourself to your duties with all your strength and with perseverance, *because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers* (1 Tim 4:16).

**Charge to the Congregation**

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<sup>8</sup> Jn 21:15, 16

Beloved brothers and sisters, the Lord has granted you this servant. Receive him with all joy. *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!* (Is 52:7). Take heed to receive the Word of God, which you shall hear from him, and accept his words, spoken according to the Holy Scriptures, *not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God* (1 Thess 2:13).

*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you* (Heb 13:17).

If you thus receive this servant from the Lord, the peace of God will come upon you, and you will inherit eternal life through Christ.<sup>9</sup>

Since we of ourselves are not capable of all this, we will call upon the Almighty God.

### **Prayer**

Merciful Father, it pleases You to gather to Yourself out of the whole human race a church chosen to life eternal. We thank You that You gather this church by the ministry of men and that You give this minister of the Word to this congregation. We pray that by Your Spirit You will equip him for the ministry to which You have called him. Enlighten his mind that he may understand the Scriptures, and open his mouth that he may proclaim the mysteries of the gospel with boldness. Grant him wisdom and faithfulness to guide the flock in the right path and to keep them in Christian peace, that by his ministry and under his good leadership Your church may be preserved and increased.

Encourage and comfort him by Your Spirit, so that he may remain steadfast in troubles and temptations during his

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<sup>9</sup> Mt 10:12, 13

ministry, and, finally, with all Your faithful servants, may enter into the joy of his Lord.

Grant that those entrusted to his pastoral care may acknowledge this servant as sent by You. Give that they may receive the instruction and admonition of Christ which this shepherd shall bring to them and that they may joyfully submit to his direction. Grant that through his ministry all may believe in Christ and thus inherit eternal life.

Hear us, O Father, through Jesus Christ Your Son, who with You and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

\*The laying on of hands shall not take place in the case of those who are already in the ministry.

### **FORM FOR THE ORDINATION (OR INSTALLATION) OF MISSIONARIES**

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ:

The consistory has now twice published the name of our brother \_\_\_\_\_, to learn if anyone had objections against his ordination installation as a missionary. Since no one has brought forward anything lawful against his doctrine and life, we will now in the Name of the Lord proceed to his ordination ( or: installation).

#### **Office**

Let us first hear what Holy Scripture teaches about the office of those ministers of the Word who are set apart for the preaching of the gospel to those who are outside.

God, our heavenly Father, in His good pleasure, gathers a church from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 24:14; Rev 5:9

He calls them out of the corrupt race of man unto life eternal.

For this purpose God sent His only Son into the world,<sup>2</sup> who came as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep,<sup>3</sup> that they may have life and have it abundantly. He calls His sheep not only from Israel but also from all the nations, and leads them to His fold, that there may be one flock, one Shepherd.<sup>4</sup>

In order to gather His church, Christ has sent the Spirit as He promised, saying, *When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me* (Jn 15:26, 27). The apostles were also witnesses, sent by Christ as He had been sent by the Father;<sup>5</sup> they testified that the Father had sent His Son as the Saviour of the world.<sup>6</sup>

It is the calling of the church, through this testimony of the apostles, to move people to believe in Christ crucified.<sup>7</sup> From the time of the apostles, the Holy Spirit has commanded the church to set men apart for the work to which He has called them.<sup>8</sup>

In order that this command may be fulfilled, the Lord Christ has now given to this congregation a minister of the Word.

### **Duties of the Missionary**

According to the mandate of the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles, a missionary shall first of all preach the Word of God to those who are without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of

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<sup>2</sup> Jn 3:16, 17

<sup>3</sup> Jn 10:11

<sup>4</sup> Jn 10:16

<sup>5</sup> Jn 20:21, 22

<sup>6</sup> 1 Jn 4:14

<sup>7</sup> Rom 10:14, 15, 17

<sup>8</sup> Acts 13:2

promise. Thus he brings hope to those who have no hope and are without God in the world, that they, being far off, may come near through the blood of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. He has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to men whom He made ambassadors of Christ. Therefore the missionary shall beseech men in the Name of Christ to *be reconciled to God* (2 Cor 5:19, 20).

He must hold firm to the reliable Word of God, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to refute those who contradict it.<sup>10</sup>

Second, he ought to baptize believers and their children into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>11</sup> teaching them to observe all that the Lord has commanded His church.

And since the Lord Jesus has commanded His church to proclaim His death until He comes,<sup>12</sup> he shall also prepare the table of the Lord in the midst of the believers. It shall be his duty to admonish the believers when they sin in doctrine and life and to deny them the use of the sacraments if they do not heed his admonitions, for the apostle Paul warned, *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons* (1 Cor 10:21).

Third, as soon as it becomes feasible he shall, in good order, ordain overseers and deacons, according to the charge and example of the apostle Paul;<sup>13</sup> so that they, as faithful men who are able to teach others also,<sup>14</sup> may guide the flock of the Lord, which He obtained with the blood of

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<sup>9</sup> Eph 2:12, 13

<sup>10</sup> Tit 1:9

<sup>11</sup> Mt 28:19

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor 11:23, 26

<sup>13</sup> Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5, 6

<sup>14</sup> 2 Tim 2:2

His Son.<sup>15</sup> He shall, however, not be hasty in the laying on of hands,<sup>16</sup> according to the warning of Paul to Timothy.

In order that the apostles would be able to fulfil this charge, the Lord Christ, to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, comforted and encouraged them, and in them His whole church, with the promise, *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Mt 28:20). This promise shall stand until the holy city, the new Jerusalem, has come down out of heaven from God.<sup>17</sup> Then the promise will be fulfilled that the nations shall walk by its light and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it.<sup>18</sup> Therefore the Lord Christ calls those blessed who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.<sup>19</sup>

### **Ordination (or: Installation)**

And now, beloved brother \_\_\_\_\_, you are about to enter upon your office, as it has been described. Therefore you are to answer the following questions before God and His holy church.

First, do you feel in your heart that God Himself through His congregation has called you to this holy ministry?

Second, do you receive the Old and the New Testament as the only Word of God and the complete doctrine of salvation and do you reject all doctrines conflicting with it?

Third, do you promise faithfully to discharge the duties of your office and to adorn the doctrine of God with a godly life? Do you also promise to do your work under the direction of and in close cooperation with the consistory of this church? Do you promise to submit to the discipline of

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>16</sup> 1 Tim 5:22

<sup>17</sup> Rev 21:10

<sup>18</sup> Rev 21; 23b, 24

<sup>19</sup> Rev 22:14

the church, in case you should become delinquent in doctrine or life?

What is your answer?

**Answer**

I do.

**Laying on of Hands \***

God, our heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy office, enlighten you with His Spirit and so govern you in your ministry that you may fulfil it obediently and that it may bear fruit to the honour of His Name and the expansion of the kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Charge to the Missionary**

Beloved brother, go then in the power of the Holy Spirit to the work to which God, through His church, has called you as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be ashamed, then, of testifying about our Lord<sup>20</sup> and take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling. *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away* (1 Pet 5:4).

**Charge to the Congregation**

Beloved brothers and sisters, the Lord has granted you this servant. Receive him with all joy. Beseech the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that He may guard him (together with his family) in all his (their) ways. Pray for him, that the Word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 2 Tim 1:8, 9

<sup>21</sup> 2 Thess 3:1



Since we of ourselves are not capable of all this, we will call upon the Almighty God.

**Prayer**

Merciful Father, You are pleased to gather to Yourself out of the whole human race a church chosen to life eternal. We thank You that You gather this church by the ministry of man and that You have graciously provided this congregation with a faithful servant who is to labour in the ministry of Your Word to those who are outside.

We pray that by Your Spirit You will equip him for the ministry to which You have called him. Enlighten his mind that he may understand the Scriptures, and open his mouth that he may boldly proclaim Your gospel, so that through his preaching many may come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant him wisdom and perseverance in all difficulties and oppression which may confront him in his ministry. Guard him in all his ways. Grant him Your grace that he may remain steadfast to the end and with all Your faithful servants may enter into the joy of his Lord.

Grant this congregation (and the cooperating churches) Your grace, that they may see what You are doing in this ministry and continually remember Your servant in their prayers, in order that they may rejoice in the propagation of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Hear us, O merciful Father, through Your dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

\*The laying on of hands shall not take place in the case of those who are already in the ministry.

**FORM FOR THE ORDINATION  
OF ELDERS AND DEACONS**

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The consistory has now twice published the names of the brothers who were elected and appointed to the office of elder and deacon in this church, to learn if anyone had objections to their ordination. Since no one has brought forward anything lawful against their doctrine and life, we shall now in the Name of the Lord proceed to their ordination.

Let us first hear what Holy Scripture teaches about the offices of elders and deacons.

### **Institution**

Already in the old dispensation the people of God enjoyed the leadership and guidance of elders.<sup>1</sup> The Lord told Moses to gather the elders of Israel together in Egypt<sup>2</sup> and to inform them of His promises to deliver them from bondage. While these elders were with Moses in the desert, the Lord told him to select from their midst seventy men to bear the burden of the people with him.<sup>3</sup> Together with Moses these elders had authority to command the people.<sup>4</sup> At the end of his ministry, Moses gave to all the elders of Israel the law to rule God's people.<sup>5</sup> Once in the promised land, these elders fulfilled their calling in every city.<sup>6</sup>

In His unceasing care for His flock the Good Shepherd called apostles to be the foundation of His catholic church. The apostles, in turn, appointed elders in every church<sup>7</sup> with the cooperation of the congregation. Apostles and elders gathered together to take decisions to which the churches had to submit.<sup>8</sup> Paul charged the overseers to take

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<sup>1</sup> Ex 3:16

<sup>2</sup> Ex 17:5

<sup>3</sup> Num 11:16

<sup>4</sup> Deut 27:1

<sup>5</sup> Deut 31:9, 10

<sup>6</sup> Josh 20:4; Judg 8:16

<sup>7</sup> Acts 14:23

<sup>8</sup> Acts 15:23; 16:4

heed to the flock in which the Holy Spirit had made them guardians. Peter admonished the elders to be shepherds of God's flock that is under their care.<sup>9</sup>

In his epistle to the Philippians, the apostle Paul addressed the saints together with the overseers and deacons.<sup>10</sup> In order that these offices might remain, he also gave his fellow workers detailed instructions for selecting brothers to these offices of overseers and deacons.<sup>11</sup>

He directed Titus to appoint elders in every town. The New Testament calls these office-bearers not only presbyters or elders but also bishops or overseers as well as shepherds and guardians.

The office of elder is, therefore, one of authority given by Christ. Elders are to fulfil their duties by reminding God's people of His ordinances and by exercising discipline over the disobedient, by caring for the flock and defending the sheep against the dangers that threaten them.

### **Mandate of the Elders**

As for their mandate, the task of the elders is, together with the ministers of the Word, to have supervision over Christ's church, that every member may conduct himself properly in doctrine and life, according to the gospel. For this purpose they shall faithfully visit the members of the congregation in their homes to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God, reproving those who behave improperly.<sup>12</sup> They shall exercise Christian discipline, according to the command of Christ, against those who show themselves unbelieving and ungodly and refuse to repent.<sup>13</sup> They shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned.

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2

<sup>10</sup> Phil 1:1

<sup>11</sup> Tit 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:1-13

<sup>12</sup> 1 Thess 2:11, 12; Tit 1:9

<sup>13</sup> Mt 18:17, 18

Second, being stewards of the house of God,<sup>14</sup> they are to take care that in the congregation all things are done decently and in good order.<sup>15</sup> For this purpose they form, together with the minister of the Word, the consistory of the church. Together they shepherd God's flock that is under their care.<sup>16</sup> They must prevent anyone from serving in the church without having been lawfully called.

Third, it is their duty to assist the ministers of the Word with good counsel and advice. They are also charged with the supervision over the doctrine and conduct of these fellow servants. They shall permit no strange teaching, so that in every respect the congregation is edified by the pure doctrine of the gospel. Therefore they must watch diligently that no wolves enter the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd.<sup>17</sup>

To do their work well as shepherds of God's flock, the overseers should train themselves in godliness and diligently search the Scriptures, which are profitable in every respect, that the man of God may be equipped for every good work.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Ministry of Mercy**

Concerning the ministry of mercy, assigned to the deacons, the Lord impressed upon His people Israel the obligation to show mercy to the needy.<sup>19</sup> God repeatedly commanded that the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow might eat within their towns and be filled.<sup>20</sup> In the old dispensation the needy and suffering were protected

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<sup>14</sup> Tit 1:7

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor 14:40

<sup>16</sup> 1 Pet 5:1-4

<sup>17</sup> Acts 20: 29-31; Jn 10:7-13

<sup>18</sup> 2 Tim 3:14-17

<sup>19</sup> Deut 14:28, 29

<sup>20</sup> Deut 16:11, 14

and provided for by God's fatherly love:<sup>21</sup> His ordinances taught the covenant people to imitate that love as beloved children.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us the Father,<sup>22</sup> came into the world to serve.<sup>23</sup> In His mercy He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and showed compassion to the afflicted.<sup>24</sup> Thus He gave an example, that His church should do likewise.<sup>25</sup> The ministry of mercy, as assigned to the deacons, proceeds, therefore, from this love of our Saviour.

After the example of her Lord, the first Christian congregation took care that no one in her midst suffered want.<sup>26</sup> To each was distributed according to need.<sup>27</sup>

Also today the Lord calls on us to show hospitality, generosity, and mercy, so that the weak and needy may share abundantly in the joy of God's people. No one in the congregation of Christ may live un comforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness, and poverty.<sup>28</sup>

For the sake of this service of love, Christ has given deacons to His church.<sup>29</sup> When the apostles realized that they would have to give up preaching the Word of God if they had to devote their full attention to the daily support of the needy, they assigned this duty to seven brothers chosen by the congregation.<sup>30</sup> It is therefore the responsibility of the deacons to see to the good progress of this service of charity in the church. They shall acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties, and exhort the members of

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<sup>21</sup> Deut, 24:19-21; 26:12, 13; 27:19

<sup>22</sup> Jn 14:9

<sup>23</sup> Mk 10:45

<sup>24</sup> Mt 4:23, 24

<sup>25</sup> Jn 13:15

<sup>26</sup> Acts 2:46

<sup>27</sup> Acts 4:32-37

<sup>28</sup> Mt 25:31-46; Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2, 16; 1 Pet 4:9

<sup>29</sup> Phil 1:1

<sup>30</sup> Acts 6:1-7

Christ's body to show mercy. They shall gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's Name, according to need. They are called to encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love. They shall promote with word and deed the unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.

In this way God's children will increase in love to one another and to all men.<sup>31</sup>

### **Ordination**

Beloved brothers, you are about to enter upon your respective offices. We request you to answer the following questions before God and His holy church.

First, do you feel in your hearts that God Himself, through His congregation, has called you to these offices?

Second, do you believe the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God and the complete doctrine of salvation? Do you reject all doctrines conflicting with it?

Third, do you promise to discharge faithfully the duties of your office and to adorn it with a godly life – you elders in the government of the church and you deacons in the ministry of mercy? Do you also promise to submit to the discipline of the church in case you should become delinquent in doctrine or life?

What is your answer?

### **Answer**

I do (to be answered by each personally).

The almighty God and Father grant you His grace, that you may faithfully and fruitfully discharge your offices. Amen.

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<sup>31</sup> Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 3:12; 2 Pet 1:7

## Charge

You, elders, as good shepherds of Christ's flock and faithful watchmen over the house of God, be diligent in governing the church, in comforting the distressed, and in admonishing the wayward. Take heed that the congregation abide by the pure doctrine and lead a godly life. *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away* (1 Pet 5:2-4).

You, deacons, be faithful and diligent in the gathering of gifts and distribute them cheerfully to those who need assistance, especially to the widows and orphans. Do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith.<sup>32</sup> Support those who are burdened with cares or who are lonely. Give in your ministry of mercy a good example to the congregation of the service to which all are called by Christ Jesus.

Be all with one accord faithful in your offices. Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.<sup>33</sup> If you serve well, you will gain a good standing for yourselves, always have great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus,<sup>34</sup> and finally enter into the joy of your Master.

On the other hand, beloved brothers and sisters, receive these men as servants of God.

Respect the overseers who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work.<sup>35</sup> *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as*

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<sup>32</sup> Gal 6:10

<sup>33</sup> 1 Tim 3:9

<sup>34</sup> 1 Tim 3:13

<sup>35</sup> 1 Thess 5:12, 13

*men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (Heb 13:17).*

Take care that the deacons have sufficient means to fulfil their ministry. Be good stewards of all that the Lord has entrusted to you. Remember Christ, your example in serving the church of God.

Since we are unable of ourselves to do all this, let us call upon the Lord our God.

### **Prayer**

Lord God and heavenly Father, it pleases You for the edification of Your church to ordain overseers and deacons besides the ministers of the Word. We thank You that You give us men who are endowed with Your Holy Spirit. Grant them more and more the gifts they need – wisdom, courage, discretion, and mercy – so that each of them may fulfil his office as it is pleasing to You.

Give Your grace to both elders and deacons that they may persevere in faithful service, without being hindered by trouble and sorrow or by persecution of the world.

Grant that this congregation, over whom You have set them, may submit willingly to the good exhortation of the overseers and esteem them in love because of their work.

Give us ardent love for each other. Grant that we may cheerfully provide the deacons with sufficient means, so that the needy may be liberally supplied.

We pray that by the faithful service of everyone the kingdom of Your Son may come and Your Name be glorified, for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.

## **FORM FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE**



### **Announcement**

The consistory announces that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have indicated their intention to enter into the married state, according to the ordinance of God. They desire to begin this holy state in the Name of the Lord and to complete it to His glory. If no lawful objection is brought forward, the ceremony will take place, the Lord willing, on ...

### **Introduction**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, since the consistory has duly made known to the congregation your desire to enter into the married state, and no lawful objection has been presented, we may now proceed to the solemnization of your marriage in the Name of the Lord.

### **The Institution of Marriage**

Let us first listen to a summary of what the Word of God teaches us about marriage. We find there that marriage is an institution of God which pleases Him, and must therefore be held in honour among all.<sup>1</sup> After God our Father made heaven and earth, He created man in His own image.<sup>2</sup> And, *The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with*

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<sup>1</sup> Heb 13:4

<sup>2</sup> Gen 1:27

*flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh* (Gen 2:18-24). We therefore believe that the LORD also today gives husband and wife to one another. Since they are united by His hand, nothing shall separate them in this life.

Also, our Lord Jesus Christ honoured marriage when He revealed His glory at the marriage feast at Cana.<sup>3</sup> He teaches us that marriage is an institution of God and should not be broken, when He says, *Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate* (Mt 19:6).

Since God has made marriage such a strong bond, He hates divorce,<sup>4</sup> as also our Lord Jesus Christ shows in these words: *I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery* (Mt 19:9).

As the Lord forbids immorality *each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband* (1 Cor 7:2), so that our bodies may be preserved as temples of the Holy Spirit and we may glorify God in our bodies.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Profound Mystery**

The apostle Paul teaches us that the unity of husband and wife in marriage is a profound mystery, reflecting the relationship between Christ and His church. As Christ is the Head of the church, so the husband is the head of his wife. Christ loved His church to the end, and gave Himself up for her, that she might be holy and without blemish; likewise the husband shall love his wife as his own body, take care

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<sup>3</sup> Jn 2:1-11

<sup>4</sup> Mal 2:16

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor 6:19, 20

of her, and cherish her. As the church is subject to Christ, so the wife shall be subject in everything to her husband, respect him, and entrust herself to his loving care,<sup>6</sup> following the example of godly women who trusted in God and were subject to their husbands.<sup>7</sup>

Husband and wife shall assist each other in all good things, heartily forgiving one another their sins and shortcomings. United in love, they will more and more reflect in their marriage the unity of Christ and His church.

Although it is true, as the apostle says, that those who marry will face trouble in this state<sup>8</sup> and because of sin will experience many difficulties and afflictions, yet they may also believe the promise of God that they, as heirs of the grace of life, will always receive His aid and protection, even when they least expect it.

### **The Purpose of Marriage**

The Word of God also teaches us about the purpose of marriage.

First, husband and wife shall live together in sincere love and holiness, helping each other faithfully in all things that belong to this life and to the life to come.

Second, by marriage the human race is to be continued and increased,<sup>9</sup> and, under the blessing of God, husband and wife will be fruitful and increase in number. If it pleases God to give them children, they shall nurture these children in the true knowledge and fear of the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

(The minister shall ask them to rise.)

### **The Duties of Marriage**

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<sup>6</sup> Eph 5:22-33; Jn 13:1

<sup>7</sup> 1 Pet 3:5

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor 7:28

<sup>9</sup> Gen 1:28

<sup>10</sup> Eph 6:4

Bridegroom and bride, hear from the Word of God what the Lord requires of you in marriage.

Bridegroom, know that God has set you to be the head of your wife. You shall love her as your own body, as Christ loved His church and gave Himself up for her. Guide, protect, and comfort your wife. Live with her wisely and honour her, because she is an heir to eternal life together with you; then your prayers will not be hindered.<sup>11</sup> Work faithfully in your daily calling, that you may support your family and also help those in need.<sup>12</sup>

Bride, you shall love your husband and be subject to him, as the church is subject to Christ. Accept his guidance and assist him in all good things. Take proper care of your family and household, and live modestly, in faith, love, and holiness.

Assist each other always and be faithful to each other. Diligently fulfil the calling which the Lord has given you in the church and in this world. Believe God's sure promise, *Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in His ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours* (Psalm 128:1, 2).

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have now heard what the Lord requires of you and what He has promised you. May our gracious God give you the strength and the faithfulness to live together as husband and wife in this manner and may your help be in the Name of the LORD who made heaven and earth.<sup>13</sup>

(Minister: Will you now join right hands?)

**The Marriage Vows**  
(To the bridegroom:)

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Pet 3:7

<sup>12</sup> Eph 4:28

<sup>13</sup> Ps 124:8

\_\_\_\_\_, do you declare here before the Lord and these witnesses that you take as your lawful wife \_\_\_\_\_, here present? Do you promise to love and guide her faithfully, to maintain her, and to live with her in holiness, according to the holy gospel? Do you also promise never to forsake her, but to be true to her always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as you both shall live?

What is your answer?

**Answer**

I do.

(To the bride:)

\_\_\_\_\_, do you declare here before the Lord and these witnesses that you take as your lawful husband \_\_\_\_\_, here present? Do you promise to love and obey him, to assist him, and to live with him in holiness, according to the holy gospel? Do you also promise never to forsake him, but to be true to him always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as you both shall live?

What is your answer?

**Answer**

I do.

**Pronouncement**

(Minister:) I now pronounce you husband and wife. The Father of all mercies, who by His grace called you to this holy state of marriage, bind you together in true love and faithfulness, and grant you His blessing. Amen.

Bridegroom and bride, since we cannot expect anything from ourselves, you shall kneel before the Lord and we

shall pray with you and for you that He may enable you to fulfil your vows and grant you His blessing.

### **Intercession**

Almighty and heavenly Father, You have said from the beginning that man should not be alone. We thank and praise You that You have given this brother and sister to each other in marriage, that they may be one.

We pray that You grant them Your Holy Spirit that they may live together according to Your will in true faith. Help them to resist the power of sin, and to live in holiness before You. Lift up Your countenance upon them, and guide them in prosperity and adversity by Your fatherly hand. Grant them Your blessing according to the covenant promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If it should please You to give them children, confirm Your covenant to them and to their seed; and grant that they may nurture these children in the fear of the Lord, to the glory of Your Name, and to the edification of the church.

Let them live in communion with Your Son Jesus Christ, in the harmony of true love, and to the benefit of their neighbour. Cause them to look forward with all the church to the great day of the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Hear us, merciful Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, who with You and the Holy Spirit, the only true God, lives and reigns for ever, Amen.

(Or add:

*Our Father in heaven,*

*hallowed be Your name,*

*Your kingdom come,*

*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us today our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,*

*for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory  
forever. Amen)*

**Benediction**

Brother and sister \_\_\_\_\_, our Lord God bless  
you richly and grant you a long and holy life together in all  
godliness, love, and unity. Amen.