

THE  
DIRECTORY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP  
FOR THE  
ASSOCIATE REFORMED  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



As Approved by the General Synod in 2007

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## NOTE ON CAPITALIZATIONS

The six documents that comprise *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* have originated in different periods of history, during which the conventions for capitalization of words have varied. In this *Directory*, the convention of the most recent documents (*The Form of Government* and *The Book of Discipline*) has been followed. However, when quotations from the other documents are used, they are given in the form in which they appear in *The Standards*. This creates a certain lack of uniformity, which the reader is asked to accept.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- COF = Confession of Faith
- DPW = Directory of Public Worship
- FOG = Form of Government
- LC = Larger Catechism
- SC = Shorter Catechism
- Q = Question
- A = Answer

## THE DIRECTORY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

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## PREAMBLE

*Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.  
 Serve the LORD with gladness:  
 Come before his presence with singing.  
 Know ye that the LORD he is God:  
 It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;  
 We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.  
 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,  
 And into his courts with praise:  
 Be thankful unto him, and bless his name.  
 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting;  
 and his truth endureth to all generations.<sup>1</sup>*

*The Directory of Public Worship for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* is in the historical lineage of *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* of 1645, produced by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster and subsequently adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In 1799, the Associate Reformed Synod meeting in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, amended and received the 1645 *Directory* as part of her official Standards. During the more than two hundred years since 1799, there have been further amendments made to the 1645 *Directory*. The most recent version, prior to this current document, was known as *The Book of Worship of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* and was adopted by the General Synod of 1975 following an extensive revision process.

The first detail the reader will notice in this present document is the name change to *The Directory of Public Worship* from the 1975 title, *The Book of Worship*. This is reflective of three matters. First, it more accurately reflects our longstanding tradition of giving a *directive* or guide in worship rather than *prescribing* set liturgical forms. The 1645 *Directory* was directive, a distinction stemming from the historical context of the Westminster Assembly and the then current *Book of Common Prayer*. The 1645 *Directory* tradition thus gives certain principled freedoms to minister and session in the planning and leading of worship with the due exercise of Christian prudence and wisdom. *The Directory of Public Worship* has been formulated with this tradition in conscious view, and thus deals primarily with principles.

Second, the keystone of the 1645 *Directory*, as well as our

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1 Ps. 100.

documents over the past two hundred years, has been an endeavor to operate upon the foundational basis of *Scripture alone* (*Sola Scriptura*) for guiding and shaping our public worship. The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, revealed to us for our faith and practice and leading us to the glory of the Triune God. Once again, *The Directory of Public Worship* holds the principle of *Scripture alone* as foundational.

Third, in the tradition of the 1645 *Directory*, there is also the didactic or teaching role to be served through such documents, making them useful texts of pastoral theology. The 1645 *Directory* freely offered advice on preaching, listening to preaching, leading in prayer, and other matters. *The Directory of Public Worship* continues this didactic purpose both in the text and in the numerous footnotes. The footnotes serve as a starting point, providing Scriptures to study. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, much as in the original spirit of the Scripture proofs to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. Also, there has been an effort in these footnotes to harmonize *The Directory of Public Worship* with *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* by abundant cross-references. This unique feature should provide greater documentary unity and allow for greater ease in instruction. However, the coordination of cross-references to *The Standards* alongside Scripture proofs should not be seen as equating the authority of the two. *The Standards* are subordinate standards, as *The Confession of Faith* and catechisms make clear.<sup>2</sup>

An appendix of sample Reformed orders of worship has also been included. These samples show particular implementations of the principles of Reformed worship since the time of the Reformation. They are but samples, and should not be interpreted as a complete set of approved orders of worship. They are intended to provide additional resources to help ministers and sessions as they seek to order public worship in our own time.

*The Scots Confession* of 1560 had this to say about public worship: “It becomes all things to be done decently and in order. Not that we think any policy and an order of ceremonies can be appointed for all ages, times, and places; for as ceremonies which men have devised are but temporal, so they may and ought to be changed, when they foster superstition rather than edify the Kirk.”<sup>3</sup> This is a most fitting

2 COF I.X, LC Q. 3, SC Q. 2.

3 *The Scots Confession*, Ch. 20, “General Councils, Their Power, Authority, and the Cause of Their Summoning.”

quotation to bear in mind as *The Directory of Public Worship* is read. It is written in the context of the early twenty-first century yet it has a line of continuity stretching back to the 1645 *Directory*.

Finally, since this is a directory for the public worship of God's people as they meet together corporately, we must recognize that public worship flows most beautifully when the people of God also meet with the Lord in private, as individuals or families. In private worship we enjoy the presence of God as though drinking from a stream; but in public worship we drink from "the river whose streams make glad the city of God."<sup>4</sup> May *The Directory of Public Worship* so bring encouragement to the people of the Lord as they gather at this blessed river of worship of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*I was glad when they said unto me,  
Let us go into the house of the LORD.*<sup>5</sup>

## CHAPTER I

### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

*Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth  
the honor of his name: Make his praise glorious.*<sup>6</sup>

*The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who  
hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good and doeth  
good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised,  
called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart,  
and with all the soul, and with all the might.*<sup>7</sup>

*Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully  
to enjoy him for ever.*<sup>8</sup>

1. By the works of His hands, and the word of His mouth, God calls all mankind to worship and serve Him. In His being and works

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4 Ps. 46:4.

5 Ps. 122:1.

6 Ps. 66:1-2.

7 COF XXII.1.

8 LC Q. 1.

God is most worthy of worship. He is the creator and sustainer of all who live; therefore, every person should honor Him as God and give Him thanks.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God.<sup>10</sup> By the mercies shown to them, those redeemed in Christ are especially called to worship and serve God.<sup>11</sup>

2. Each moment of every day belongs to God and is to be lived before His presence, in submission to His lordship, and to His honor and glory. It is also necessary that a due proportion of time be set apart for offering to God that worship which He has commanded all people to give.<sup>12</sup> Such worship is to be given individually, in families, and in corporate gatherings of public worship.
3. From the creation of the world God has set apart one day in seven as holy to Himself.<sup>13</sup> It is therefore imperative for all people, especially the people of God redeemed in Christ, to gather together in public assemblies for offering to God the worship He is pleased to receive and has revealed to us in His Holy Word.<sup>14</sup>

## CHAPTER II

### THE RULE OF WORSHIP

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*<sup>15</sup>

*. . . the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.*<sup>16</sup>

9 Ps. 95, Ps. 96, Rom. 1:18-23.

10 I Cor. 10:31.

11 Rom. 12:1-2.

12 Psalms 95-100.

13 Gen. 2:1-3, Exod. 20:8, COF XXI.VII.

14 Deut. 12:29-32, Matt. 15:8-9, John 4:23-24, II Tim. 3:16-17, COF XXI.I-II.

15 II Tim. 3:16 (ESV).

16 COF XXI.I.

Q. 2. *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

A. *The word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.*<sup>17</sup>

1. The God who calls us to worship also directs us how to worship. The Word of God given to us in the Holy Scriptures is the only rule to direct us in how we may worship and glorify Him. What He commands us, we must do, neither adding to nor taking away from anything which He commands.<sup>18</sup>
2. The parts (elements) to be included in the worship of God are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be derived from Scripture.<sup>19</sup>
3. Certain matters or circumstances concerning worship have not been fixed by a definite rule in the Holy Scriptures,<sup>20</sup> such as the order of worship which is to be followed, the appointed time or place for the gathering of God's people, or the music to be used in singing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. In such matters or circumstances, the church must be guided by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.<sup>21</sup>
4. Because there are matters or circumstances concerning worship which have not been fixed by a definite rule in Scripture, and because no precise order of worship has been given to us in Scripture, it is not to be expected that worship which is true to Scripture and acceptable to God will be exactly the same in every place or time.<sup>22</sup>
5. The service of worship shall be under the authority of the minister and the session.<sup>23</sup>

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17 SC Q. 2.

18 Deut. 12:29-32, LC Q. 109

19 II Tim. 3:15-17, COF I.VI.

20 COF I.VI.

21 I Cor. 11:13-16; 14:26, 40.

22 See the quotation from *The Scots Confession* in the Preamble above.

23 FOG I.A.2, X.B.1.a, XI.B.2.k-l.

## CHAPTER III

## THE NATURE OF WORSHIP

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.<sup>24</sup>*

1. Christian worship is a work of God's sanctifying grace by which He draws His people into communion with Himself and calls forth their active, grateful, obedient, loving, joyful, reverent, whole-hearted response to all He is and has done for them.<sup>25</sup>
2. Worship is to be given to God, and to God alone,<sup>26</sup> as Father,<sup>27</sup> Son,<sup>28</sup> and Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> Because all mankind is sinful by nature and separated from God,<sup>30</sup> the only worship which is acceptable to God is that which is offered in the name and through the mediation of the Son,<sup>31</sup> by the working of the Holy Spirit,<sup>32</sup> according to God's holy will revealed in the Scriptures.<sup>33</sup>
3. Worship may be viewed in the broader sense as a way of life devoted to serving and glorifying God so that whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God.<sup>34</sup> In the narrower sense, worship may be viewed as particular occasions of worship, such as public or private worship,<sup>35</sup> or as particular

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24 Rom. 11:33–12:1.

25 Ps. 98, Ps. 116:12-19, Matt. 22:36-39, I Pet. 2:9-10.

26 Deut. 6:13-15, Matt. 4:10, Rom. 11:36.

27 John 4:21-23.

28 John 5:23.

29 Matt. 28:19.

30 Isa. 59:2; Rom. 3:23, 5:12.

31 John 14:6, I Tim. 2:5, Col. 3:17.

32 Eph. 2:18.

33 Deut. 12:29-32, Matt. 15:8-9, John 4:23-24, II Tim. 3:16-17, COF XXI.I-II.

34 Rom. 12:1-2, I Cor. 10:31.

35 Heb. 10:19-25.

acts of worship, such as prayer, singing of praise, and the ministry of the Word and sacrament.

4. Worship, whether broadly or narrowly defined, public or private, formal or informal, planned or spontaneous, is not made acceptable by physical location or external exercises but must be offered from the heart to God alone, through Christ alone, and in the power and under the authority of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures.<sup>36</sup> Though no part of worship is tied to or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, yet it can be convenient and helpful for particular places to be set apart for worship, especially for public worship.
5. Regular individual and family worship are essential expressions of Christian worship. Such worship should include reading of Scripture and prayer, and may also include singing of praise, catechizing, and discussion appropriate to the age and understanding of those present. Materials used in individual and family worship should conform to the Holy Scriptures and *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*. Ordinarily, the head of the home should assume leadership responsibility for family worship, and participation by all present should be encouraged.<sup>37</sup>
6. Public worship is a holy convocation in which the Triune God meets with and ministers to His assembled covenant people through Word and sacrament, and His people respond with praise, thanksgiving, repentance, confession of sin, supplication, and confession of faith. Therefore, public worship is to be centered on glorifying God, showing forth the worth and excellence of God.<sup>38</sup> It should be exalting of Christ and empowered by the Spirit.<sup>39</sup> It is to be participatory, reverent, orderly, and edifying, in a spirit of simplicity<sup>40</sup> and sincerity.<sup>41</sup>

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36 John 4:23-24, COF XXI.VI.

37 Deut. 6:4-9, Eph. 6:4, COF XXI.VI.

38 Rom. 12:1-2, "...holy and acceptable to God."

39 COF XXI.I-V.

40 John 4:23-24.

41 Matt. 6:1-18.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S DAY

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*<sup>42</sup>

1. As it is the law of nature that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all people in all ages, He has particularly appointed one day in seven to be a day set apart and kept holy to Him.<sup>43</sup> From the beginning of creation to the resurrection of Christ, this day was the seventh day of the week,<sup>44</sup> but following the resurrection this day became the first day of the week and is called the Lord's Day.<sup>45</sup>
2. The Lord's Day is to be kept holy by a holy resting all the day, making it our delight<sup>46</sup> to spend the whole time in the public and private exercises of religion, together with works of necessity and mercy.<sup>47</sup> To that end, we should prepare our hearts and order our lives and labors beforehand so that the whole day may be kept for the Lord.<sup>48</sup>
3. When the day is properly kept, it is experienced as a day of joy and celebration in holy convocation.<sup>49</sup> On this day we are enabled by the Spirit to leave the toils and worries of this world and taste afresh of the heavenly rest, returning to the household of God who inhabits the praises of His people.<sup>50</sup> We are to imitate the example of God, who rested and was refreshed when He finished the work of creation.<sup>51</sup> We are to remember our deliverance and salvation, and look forward to the eternal rest secured for us in the resurrection of Christ;<sup>52</sup> even as our forefathers under the Old Testament recalled their deliverance from Egypt and the gift of rest in the promised land.<sup>53</sup>

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42 Exod. 20:8.

43 COF XXI.VII.

44 Exod. 20:8, 31:12-17.

45 Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23, 26-29; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10.

46 Isa. 58:13-14.

47 Mark 2:23—3:5, Luke 13:10-16, COF XXI.VIII.

48 Exod. 16:5, 22-30; COF XXI.VIII; LC Q. 117.

49 Neh. 8:9-12; Ps. 122:1; Is. 56:1-8, 58:13-14.

50 Ps. 22:3.

51 Exod. 20:8, 31:17.

52 Heb. 4:1-10.

53 Deut. 5:12-15.

4. Other days of public worship may be provided besides the Lord's Day, but it is both the happy privilege and the solemn duty of all God's people to assemble for worship on the Lord's Day as they are able.<sup>54</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### THE ORDERING OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

*Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!*<sup>55</sup>

#### A. INTRODUCTION

*God alone is lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.*<sup>56</sup>

1. The *parts* of public worship are those acts of worship which God is pleased to receive from His people, and has revealed to us in His Word.<sup>57</sup>
2. The *ordinary* parts of worship are those which are regular (*i.e.*, "according to rule") or normative for the public worship of God. Together they are the standard means by which God is to be worshipped, though not every part will occur in every service of worship (*e.g.*, baptism).

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54 Heb. 10:25.

55 Ps. 105:1-4 (ESV).

56 COF XX.II.

57 See COF XXI.III, V.

3. The *occasional* parts of worship are those which occur as circumstances require.

## B. THE ORDINARY PARTS

*Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men... The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the word, in obedience to God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God...<sup>58</sup>*

### 1. THE CALL TO PUBLIC WORSHIP

*O come, let us worship and bow down:  
Let us kneel before the LORD our maker.  
For he is our God;  
And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.<sup>59</sup>*

- a. Corporate worship is both a great privilege and an act of covenant obedience to the Triune God, who graciously summons His people to come into His saving presence in worship. The Scriptures bear ample witness to such calls to worship, particularly in the book of Psalms.<sup>60</sup> These Biblical calls to worship serve to set apart our public worship as a holy act in the presence of the holy God, to emphasize God's worthiness to receive the worship of His people, and to summon God's people to the humble and joyful adoration that God desires.

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58 COF XXI.III, V. The quotation is continued below under "C. The Occasional Parts." *The Directory of Public Worship* discusses more ordinary parts of public worship than are listed in *The Confession of Faith*. The view taken is that the list in *The Confession* is not exhaustive. The original Westminster *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* mentions a call to worship and dismissal with a blessing, but does not list these in *The Confession*, suggesting that the Assembly at Westminster likewise did not view the list as exhaustive.

59 Ps. 95:6-7.

60 Ps. 34:1-3, Ps. 95:1-7, Ps. 96:1-9, Ps. 98:1-6, Ps. 100, Ps. 105:1-6, Ps. 107:1-3, Ps. 111:1-5, Ps. 113:1-3, Ps. 117, Ps. 118:1-4, Ps. 150.

In these calls to worship the church also looks forward in hope to that time when all creation shall join together in praise and thanksgiving to God.<sup>61</sup>

- b. Thus it is appropriate that a call to worship be proclaimed at the inception of the worship service. The content of this call may be taken from Scripture, although other forms may be used insofar as they are consistent with Holy Scripture and *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*.

## 2. PRAYER

*Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.*<sup>62</sup>

- a. It is the duty of all people to pray. Prayer that is acceptable to God is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of the Spirit, according to God's will.<sup>63</sup>
- b. The whole of public worship should be approached and conducted in a spirit of prayer, whether singing, reciting Psalms, reading and hearing the Word, making offerings, and receiving the sacraments and benedictions.<sup>64</sup>
- c. The prayers of public worship should include praise and adoration to God,<sup>65</sup> as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, according to His glorious attributes and wonderful deeds.<sup>66</sup> There should be thanksgiving to God for all His benefits and blessings,<sup>67</sup> repentance, confession of sin (after which by the authority of the Word of God a minister should declare the assurance of pardon), intercessions, and supplications.<sup>68</sup>

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61 Ps. 96:1-3, Ps. 97:1, Ps. 98:7-9.

62 SC Q. 98.

63 COF XXI.III.

64 Eph. 6:18, Col. 4:2, I Thess. 5:17.

65 Ps. 146:1-2, Ps. 147:1.

66 Ps. 145, Ps. 150:2.

67 Ps. 103.

68 I Tim. 2:1-2, LC Qs. 183-185.

- d. Prayer, “being one special part of religious worship,”<sup>69</sup> should be included in every service of public worship. There may be seasons of open prayer where all may participate. The congregation may also unite in prayers from printed texts, in responsive prayers, or in silent prayers. Various Psalms may be used as set prayers or as models of prayer upon which new prayers may be formed. The whole congregation may be led in prayer by one or several appointed to the task.<sup>70</sup>
- e. Those who lead the congregation in prayer undertake to give voice to the prayers of the whole congregation. Careful thought and preparation should go into such prayers.<sup>71</sup>

### 3. READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

*The holy scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.*<sup>72</sup>

- a. The reading of the Word of God is a distinct and essential act of public worship.<sup>73</sup> In it God speaks directly to His people by a Word “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”<sup>74</sup> This Word is able to build up the congregation and give them the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.<sup>75</sup> It does not return to the Lord without accomplishing the purpose for which it is sent.<sup>76</sup>

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69 COF XXI.III.

70 II Chron. 6:12-42, 20:1-19; Ezra 9; Neh. 8; Dan. 9:3-19; Matt. 6:9-13; Acts 4:24-30; James 5:13-16; DPW II.5.

71 Eccl. 5:1-3, Matt. 6:7-13 (Note the use of the plural pronouns in the Lord’s Prayer).

72 LC Q. 157.

73 Neh. 8, Acts 13:15, II Cor. 3:15, I Tim. 4:13.

74 Heb. 4:12 (ESV).

75 Acts 20:32.

76 Isa. 55:10-11.

- b. Public reading of the Word of God may occur in various ways. It may be read by one to all, or in unison, or responsively.<sup>77</sup>
- c. Though the reading of the Word is joined to the preaching of the Word in public worship, giving a distinct place to the reading of the Word elevates the authority of the Word and God Himself as He meets with His people. The reading of the Word of God should be without interruption or interpretive comments, unless there is special concern that a particular word or sentence might be misunderstood. The sermon would normally be the time for providing interpretations, exhortations, and applications of the Word.
- d. We are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.<sup>78</sup> "All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God might be complete, equipped for every good work."<sup>79</sup> Consequently, it is well that a regular and systematic reading of all the Scripture should be provided in public worship for the people of God.

#### 4. PREACHING AND HEARING THE WORD

*The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace; and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.<sup>80</sup>*

- a. God has provided that His Word not only be read but also preached to His people.<sup>81</sup> The Triune God speaks to His people by the Holy Spirit in the reading and preaching of the Word.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, great care is to be taken by the church, especially by

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77 LC Q. 156.

78 Deut. 8:3, Matt. 4:4.

79 II Tim. 3:16-17 (ESV).

80 LC Q. 155.

81 I Tim. 4:13, 5:17.

82 John 1:14-18; Heb. 1:1-2, 12:25; I John 1:1-3.

its sessions and presbyteries, to ensure that the preaching of the Word is conducted only by those gifted, qualified, called, and duly set apart to this task, in accordance with the Scriptures<sup>83</sup> and *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*.<sup>84</sup>

- b. Every minister of the Word should do his best to present himself as one who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of Truth.<sup>85</sup> The same is required of any others who teach or preach the Word, such as ruling elders<sup>86</sup> and students of theology.<sup>87</sup>

*They that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine...*<sup>88</sup>

- (1) *diligently, in season and out of season;*<sup>89</sup>

The lips of a minister, like those of the priests of old, “should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”<sup>90</sup> A minister must labor earnestly and devotedly in the task of preaching and teaching the Word of God.<sup>91</sup> He must take pains with this work, to ensure his own salvation and that of those who hear him.<sup>92</sup> Great care must be taken that the ministry of the Word not be hindered or neglected because the minister has become too occupied with other important tasks of ministry.<sup>93</sup>

- (2) *plainly, not in the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power;*<sup>94</sup>

The minister should aim to make the Word of God

83 I Tim. 3:1-7, 5:22; Titus 1:5-9.

84 FOG X.C.2.

85 II Tim. 2:15.

86 I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:9.

87 FOG X.C.2.

88 LC Q. 159 for here and what follows in this section.

89 Acts 18:25, II Tim. 4:2.

90 Mal. 2:7.

91 I Tim. 4:10.

92 I Tim. 4:16.

93 Acts 6:2-4.

94 I Cor. 2:4, 14:19.

understandable to the people, and not to entertain, impress, or please them by his own words, so that their faith might rest in the power of God and not in the wisdom of men.<sup>95</sup>

- (3) *faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God;*<sup>96</sup>

Because all Scripture is inspired and profitable, the minister must plan carefully and work diligently to insure that the Word of God in all its fullness is taught to the people, always pointing to Christ as the fulfillment and embodiment of the Word.<sup>97</sup>

- (4) *wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers;*<sup>98</sup>

The minister must labor diligently to understand both the Word of God and the people. He is to communicate God's Word in terms and ways they can understand, as the Levites did following the reading of the Law by Ezra.<sup>99</sup> He must concern himself with young and old, the learned and the unlearned, and speak to each as is necessary and appropriate in order to make plain the Word of God.

- (5) *zealously, with fervent love to God and to the souls of his people;*<sup>100</sup>

As God's undershepherd, the minister must be motivated by love for God and His people. God's love for the sheep is not only to be spoken, but demonstrated to them in the love of the minister.

- (6) *sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.*<sup>101</sup>

It is of paramount importance that a minister guard

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95 I Cor. 2:5.

96 Jer. 23:28, Acts 20:27, I Cor. 4:1-2.

97 Luke 24:25-27, 44-48; Rom. 10:4; II Cor. 1:20; Gal. 3:24.

98 Luke 12:42, I Cor. 3:2, Col. 1:28, II Tim. 2:15, Heb. 5:12-14.

99 Neh. 8:7-12.

100 Acts 18:25; II Cor. 5:13-14, 12:15; Phil. 1:15-17; Col. 4:12.

101 John 7:18; Acts 26:16-18; I Cor. 9:19-22; II Cor. 2:17, 4:2, 12:19; Eph. 4:12; I Thess. 2:4-6; I Tim. 4:16.

his own heart with all diligence,<sup>102</sup> so that his focus will always be maintained on the glory of God and the good of the people.<sup>103</sup> He must labor to call sinners to repentance,<sup>104</sup> to offer the gospel freely to the unconverted, and to build up the faith of those who believe, declaring to them the whole counsel of God.<sup>105</sup>

- c. Great care and diligence toward hearing the Word of God must also be given by the people.

*It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they...*<sup>106</sup>

- (1) *attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer;*<sup>107</sup>

Regular and faithful attendance for hearing the Word of God preached is required of all. We are to encourage one another in it and are not to forsake our assembling together.<sup>108</sup> Prayerful preparation should mark our approach to the preaching of the Word, for only as the Lord opens our hearts and minds are we enabled to understand clearly and receive by faith the truth of God's Word.

- (2) *examine what they hear by the scriptures;*<sup>109</sup>

All who hear the Word of God preached should examine what they hear by comparing it with Scripture. One's own conscience cannot be yielded to another person, and simply to receive the word of any person as the Word of God is to commit idolatry. Great care should be taken to understand what has been preached and to know that it is indeed what God's Word teaches.

- (3) *receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the word of God;*<sup>110</sup>

When the Word has been faithfully preached, it should

102 Prov. 4:23; I Tim. 4:6-16, 6:20-21; II Tim. 1-4.

103 Is. 52:7, Rom. 10:14-15.

104 COF XVI.

105 Acts 20:27.

106 LC Q. 160 for here and what follows in this section.

107 Ps. 119:18, Prov. 8:34, Luke 8:18, Eph. 6:18-19, I Pet. 2:1-2.

108 Heb. 10:25.

109 Acts 17:11.

110 Acts 17:11, I Thess. 2:13, II Thess. 2:10, Heb. 4:2, James 1:21.

be received in faith, love, and meekness. We should bow before its authority as coming from God Himself and we should obey Him promptly and sincerely.

- (4) *meditate, and confer of it;*<sup>111</sup>

One should carefully meditate on the preached Word, that it might be better understood and applied.<sup>112</sup> Discussing the Word with others, especially with those more mature in the faith, can be of great help to us in coming to a clear understanding of the Word.

- (5) *hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.*<sup>113</sup>

The Word which has been preached should not be forgotten, but hidden in the heart.<sup>114</sup> It is the Word implanted which is able to save our souls.<sup>115</sup> All care should be taken that the Word which has been heard will prove to be fruitful to the honor and glory of God.<sup>116</sup>

## 5. PSALMS, HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD,  
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;  
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,  
and your faithfulness by night.  
to the music of the lute and the harp,  
to the melody of the lyre.  
For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;  
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.*<sup>117</sup>

- a. The Word of God provides that musical offerings, both vocal and instrumental, may be made to God as part of His worship.<sup>118</sup> Musical offerings are made to God at

111 Deut. 6:6-7; Luke 9:44, 24:14; Heb. 2:1.

112 Ps. 1.

113 Prov. 2:1, Ps. 119:11, Luke 8:15, James 1:25.

114 Ps. 119:11.

115 James 1:21.

116 Luke 8:4-15.

117 Ps. 92:1-4 (ESV).

118 Ps. 33:1-3; see I Chron. 25 and II Chron. 29:25-30. In 1891 the General Synod approved the use of musical instruments in public worship.

His command,<sup>119</sup> for His own glory,<sup>120</sup> and for the help, consolation, joy, and edification of His people.<sup>121</sup> Though some are particularly equipped for singing, for playing musical instruments, and for training and leading in the musical offerings to God,<sup>122</sup> yet it is the privilege and duty of all to join in the praises and to sing to the Lord.<sup>123</sup> All music used in the worship service shall be under the authority of the minister and the session.<sup>124</sup>

- b. Because God has enabled some of His people in special ways for making music,<sup>125</sup> it is fitting that the musical offerings of individuals or groups within the congregation be included within the public worship of God. As members of the body join their hearts with the minister in making corporate prayers to God, so they should join their hearts with singers and musicians for the offering of music in the worship of God.
- c. As the minister must guard his heart to see that he preaches only for the glory of God and the good of His people, so musicians must guard their hearts to see that their music be offered to the glory of God and the edification of His people.<sup>126</sup> Music offered merely for human entertainment or pleasure has no place in a worship service.
- d. The Psalms of the Holy Scripture ought to be used regularly in the public worship of God. This collection of thanksgivings, lamentations, confessions, petitions, and praises formed the book of praise for Israel,<sup>127</sup> and became in part the basis of praise in the New Testament Church.<sup>128</sup> They should be sung frequently, whether by one, by several, or by all the people of God. They also may be prayed, read, or chanted by one, in unison, or responsively.<sup>129</sup>

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119 II Chron. 29:25, Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16.

120 Ps. 96:1-9.

121 Ps. 57, Ps. 147:1-3, I Cor. 14:26, Col. 3:16-17, II Thess. 2:15-17.

122 I Chron. 15:22, I Cor. 14:26.

123 Ps. 148; Ps. 150:6; Rev. 5:8-10, 14:1-3.

124 FOG I.A.2, X.B.1.a, XI.B.2.k-l.

125 I Chron. 15:16-24, I Cor. 14:26.

126 I Cor. 10:31, 14:26.

127 II Chron. 29:25-30.

128 Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, James 5:13.

129 See above, V.B.2.d.

- e. Other hymns and spiritual songs may also be used, provided that their content is in agreement with the Word of God. The Scriptures, particularly the Psalms, and the doctrinal standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, should guide us in the use and composition of such other hymns and spiritual songs.<sup>130</sup>

## 6. TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people,  
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.  
Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name:  
Bring an offering, and come into his courts.*<sup>131</sup>

- a. From ancient times tithes and offerings have been made to and received by God.<sup>132</sup> They are a part of the ordinary worship of God, commanded in the Law.<sup>133</sup> Our Lord also taught the importance of returning to God a portion of what one has received.<sup>134</sup> The Apostle Paul instructed the Corinthians to lay aside their gifts for the saints in Jerusalem on the first day of the week.<sup>135</sup> This coincides with the day when the early church met for worship.<sup>136</sup>
- b. The presentation of tithes and offerings is to be made humbly before God, in singleness of heart. Pride and self-righteousness in giving is to be abhorred.<sup>137</sup> Giving must be from a cheerful heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion.<sup>138</sup> Giving to God should be done in response and thanksgiving for all He has given to us.<sup>139</sup>

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130 In 1946 the General Synod approved the use of hymns in addition to the Psalms. The General Synod's Committee on Worship maintains a list of those hymnals which are approved and recommended for use in ARP churches.

131 Ps. 96:7-8.

132 Gen. 4:3-7, 14:20 (Heb. 7:1-9), 28:22.

133 Exod. 25:1-9; Lev. 27:30-34; Num. 7, 28, 29; Mal. 3:6-10.

134 Matt. 5:23-24, 23:23; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 20:25.

135 I Cor. 16:2.

136 Acts 20:7.

137 Matt. 6:1-4.

138 Acts 2:44-45, 4:34-35; II Cor. 9:7.

139 II Cor. 8:9.

## 7. CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:*

*He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated by the Spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations,  
believed on in the world  
taken up in glory.<sup>140</sup>*

- a. A confession of faith is an act of worship in which the people of God reaffirm their faith in the Lord as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. This may be done by using select portions of the Holy Scriptures, or by creeds which faithfully express the teaching of the Scriptures. For example, the doctrinal standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church express our unity with one another. The historic creeds of the Church, such as *The Apostles' Creed* or *The Nicene Creed*, express our identification with the "one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic church."<sup>141</sup>
- b. The use of a confession of faith is warranted by the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, the people of God were directed to proclaim their faith before the Lord in response to God's deeds of covenant faithfulness and mighty acts of salvation. As an act of worship, the people of God proclaimed their deliverance from Egypt during their offering of the firstfruits.<sup>142</sup> The *Shema*, "Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" functioned as the creed of Israel in the later worship of the synagogue.<sup>143</sup>
- c. In the New Testament, there are portions of credal hymns that constitute brief statements of faith concerning Jesus Christ.<sup>144</sup> Also, in the post-apostolic period, the Christian community recognized the need for summary statements of belief that candidates for baptism might profess before the assembly (e.g., *The Apostles' Creed*) as well as statements of belief (e.g., *The Nicene Creed*) that distinguish the orthodox faith from heresy.

140 I Tim. 3:16 (ESV).

141 *The Nicene Creed*.

142 Deut. 26:5-9.

143 Deut. 6:4-6.

144 Eph. 4:4-10, Phil. 2:6-11, I Tim. 3:16, and II Tim. 2:11-13 are usually offered as examples.

## 8. SACRAMENTS

*Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in Him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his word.<sup>145</sup>*

*A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.<sup>146</sup>*

## a. Introduction

- (1) Sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace.<sup>147</sup> As signs, they signify (represent) the benefits promised to believers<sup>148</sup> by God in His covenant of grace, and the duties required of them as members of that covenant.<sup>149</sup> As seals, they confirm these promises, assuring believers that God is faithful to perform all that He has promised.<sup>150</sup> They also confirm our membership in God's covenant people<sup>151</sup> and bind us to our covenant obligations.<sup>152</sup>
- (2) Sacraments have been appointed as means of grace.<sup>153</sup> Because of the sacramental union between the signs and what they signify,<sup>154</sup> sacraments are instruments for the communication of spiritual blessing<sup>155</sup> to those who are enabled by the Holy Spirit to receive and partake of them by faith.<sup>156</sup>

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145 COF XXVII.I.

146 SC Q. 92.

147 COF XXVII.I, LC Q. 162.

148 Acts 2:37-39; Rom. 4:11, 6:3; Gal. 3:27.

149 Gen. 17:1-14, Matt. 28:19-20.

150 Rom. 4:11-21.

151 Gal. 3:27-29, I Pet. 2:10.

152 Matt. 28:19-20, Rom. 6:1-14, I Cor. 10:21.

153 LC Qs. 153-154, 161-177; SC Qs. 85, 88-98.

154 COF XXVII.II, LC Q. 163.

155 SC Qs. 32-38 concisely summarize the benefits secured to believers by Christ's redemption.

156 COF XXVII.III and XXVIII.VI, LC Qs. 161-162, SC Qs. 91-92.

- (3) Sacraments are the Word made visible.<sup>157</sup> They are to be administered only by ministers of the Word lawfully ordained.<sup>158</sup> Their administration should always be accompanied by the proclamation of the Word, inasmuch as the Word sets forth the promises and obligations of the Gospel which the sacraments signify and seal.
- (4) Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two sacraments of the New Testament instituted by Jesus Christ.<sup>159</sup>
- (5) The offering and administration of the sacraments shall at all times be under the authority of the minister and the session, in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*.<sup>160</sup>

#### b. The Sacrament of Baptism

*Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.*<sup>161</sup>

- (1) The sacrament of baptism is God's Word to us, testifying to God's covenant of grace,<sup>162</sup> setting forth and confirming His gracious promises and righteous demands.<sup>163</sup> It is a sign and seal of God's covenant in the Gospel, proclaiming and confirming to believers their ingrafting into Christ, remission of sins, regeneration by the Spirit, adoption as children of God, and resurrection to everlasting life.<sup>164</sup> It marks out

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157 COF XXVII.III.

158 COF XXVII.IV, XXVIII.II, and XXIX.III; FOG X.B.1.a, X.C.11.

159 Matt. 28:18-19, Luke 22:19-20, COF XXVII.IV-V, LC Q. 164, SC Q. 93.

160 COF XXVII.IV; FOG X.B.1.a, XI.B.2.k.

161 LC Q. 165.

162 COF VII.III-VI.

163 COF VII.III, SC Q. 94.

164 COF XXVIII.I; LC Qs. 165, 177.

those who belong to this covenant, putting a visible and tangible difference between them and the rest of the world.<sup>165</sup> The name of the Triune God is placed upon them,<sup>166</sup> signifying that those who are baptized belong to God and not to themselves, and so must live according to God's covenant and commandments.<sup>167</sup> God takes them as His people, and gives Himself to them, saying, "I will be your God and you will be my people."<sup>168</sup> Those who receive the sacrament of baptism are thereby called to live as the children of God,<sup>169</sup> trusting in His grace, believing His promises, and keeping His commandments.

- (2) The sacrament of baptism not only shows God's grace but also is a means by which His grace is communicated to the elect, for "by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time."<sup>170</sup> Each baptism is a means of grace for the whole Church.<sup>171</sup> When by faith we witness the baptism of others, and/or recall our own baptism, the promises of God are confirmed to us, for we know that God cannot lie.<sup>172</sup> Likewise, our duties to God are freshly impressed upon us, and we are moved to renew our obedience.<sup>173</sup>
- (3) Baptism is appointed for the solemn admission of the one who is baptized into the visible church,<sup>174</sup> which is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>175</sup> the house and

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165 COF XXVII.I.

166 Matt. 28:19.

167 Matt. 28:19.

168 Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23, 11:4, 24:7, 30:22, 31:33, 32:38; Ezek. 11:20, 14:11, 34:30, 36:28, 37:23, 27; Hosea 2:23; Zech. 8:8, 13:9; II Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10; I Pet. 2:9-10.

169 Exod. 4:22, John 1:12-13.

170 COF XXVIII.VI.

171 LC Q. 167.

172 Tit. 1:2, Heb. 6:17-18.

173 Rom. 6:3-14.

174 I Cor. 12:13, COF XXV.II-IV, LC Qs. 62-63.

175 Matt. 13:47-50.

family of God,<sup>176</sup> outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.<sup>177</sup> As such, it should ordinarily be administered in the presence of the worshipping community. It is appropriate that the privileges and responsibilities of church membership be emphasized in connection with the administration of baptism.

(a) *“All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. And being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces; and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.”*<sup>178</sup>

(b) *“Church members are required to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the Church, to give of their substance as the Lord may prosper them, to render wholehearted service to Christ and His Kingdom throughout the world, to continue in the peace and fellowship of the people of God, and to so live as to bear faithful witness to the Gospel.”*<sup>179</sup>

- (4) In the administration of baptism, the emphasis is on God’s bringing people into covenant relationship with Himself. Baptism is not primarily a means through which one signifies a commitment to Christ. The baptism of children is not intended as a sign of their parents’ faith. Nor is it an act of dedication by the parents, giving up their child to God and seeking from God a blessing upon their child. All these things may accompany baptism, as our response to God. Nonetheless, the primary focus must be on God’s initiative to establish a covenant with His people: marking them as His own, assuring them of the truth of His promises, and calling them to covenant faithfulness.

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176 Eph. 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:15.

177 COF XXV.II.

178 COF XXVI.I.

179 FOG V.B.

- (5) The sacrament of baptism is to be administered according to the command of Christ, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,<sup>180</sup> and only by an ordained minister of the Word.<sup>181</sup> There should be prayer for God's blessing upon the administration of the sacrament. Afterwards, the minister shall baptize each one with water alone:

*“(pronounce the person’s name), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”*

- (6) Following the baptism, the minister shall encourage the congregation to welcome each new member in the household of God, and charge those who have been baptized, or the parents of such, and the members of the congregation, to be faithful in their covenant with God and with one another.
- (7) The sacrament of baptism shall be administered only once to each person.<sup>182</sup> The one who comes to faith after receiving Christian baptism does not need to be and should not be baptized again. Baptism is the sign of God's covenant with His people, signifying and sealing all that He has promised to them and all that He requires of them. It is not a sign that one has repented and now believes. Consequently, though one might have been in the bondage of sin and without faith when he was baptized, God's promises were nonetheless made to him and God's demands were nonetheless placed upon him. His sin and unbelief did not make void the promises of God or nullify His demands. As the apostle says, “What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar...”<sup>183</sup>

#### The Baptism of Adults

- (8) Those who desire to commit their lives to Christ, and enter into communicant membership in Christ's Church, and who have not been baptized, should

180 Matt. 28:19-20.

181 COF XXVII.IV, XXVIII.II; FOG X.C.11.

182 Eph. 4:5, COF XXVIII.VII.

183 Rom. 3:4.

receive the sacrament of baptism. Before the sacrament is administered, it is desirable that such persons receive instruction concerning the meaning of the sacrament, the nature of the Church and the Christian faith, and the privileges and obligations attendant upon membership in the Church.<sup>184</sup>

- (9) Those seeking to be admitted to communicant church membership should be examined by the session in private with regard to a knowledge of their spiritual need, their faith in Christ, and their intention to be obedient to Him.<sup>185</sup> After they have satisfied the session as to their Christian commitment and given assent to the questions required for communicant church membership in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, they shall ordinarily be presented before the congregation for baptism in a service of public worship.<sup>186</sup> "In cases of exigency a pastor may hear the profession of faith of a penitent sinner and administer to him the Sacrament of Baptism. He (the pastor) shall then report his action to the session."<sup>187</sup>
- (10) Those who are baptized upon profession of faith shall be recorded as communicant members of the Church, and they shall be welcomed as fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.<sup>188</sup>
- (11) When adults with infant or young children come to faith and receive baptism for themselves, it is appropriate for the children to be baptized at the same time, being now children of the covenant by virtue of at least one parent's faith.<sup>189</sup>

### The Baptism of Children

- (12) The baptism of infant or young children is identical in meaning with the baptism of those making a profession of faith. God's covenant is made with believers and their children,<sup>190</sup> whether born to them or adopted

184 Acts 2:40-41, 16:32-33.

185 FOG V.C.1.a.

186 FOG V.C.1.a-d.

187 FOG V.C.1.c.

188 Eph. 2:19.

189 I Cor. 7:14.

190 Gen. 17:7, Acts 2:39, Gal. 3:16, COF XXVIII.IV, LC Q. 166.

into their families.<sup>191</sup> Baptism sets forth the grace of God in Jesus Christ and affirms that all who believe and their children are heirs of this covenant of grace, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself. In the sacrament of baptism they are acknowledged to be members of the household and family of God. God's name and claim are placed upon them and His covenant promises and demands are thereby signified and sealed. It is thus the responsibility of parents to present their children for baptism at an early age. It is likewise the responsibility of sessions to encourage parents to present their children for baptism.<sup>192</sup>

- (13) The baptism of covenant children has particular significance for the Church. God gave the Old Testament covenant sign of circumcision and instructed that it be applied to sons only eight days after their birth.<sup>193</sup> This indicated that they were holy, set apart as belonging to God's covenant people. The New Testament covenant sign of baptism replaces that of circumcision,<sup>194</sup> and is to be applied to all covenant members.<sup>195</sup> The application of the covenant sign to infants shows that, even before the children confess Him, God has set them apart, called them as His own, given and confirmed promises to them of salvation through faith, welcomed them into the household of God, and called them to faith and to faithfulness. It is thus a remarkable exhibition of the unmerited grace of God that is given to His people, for God demonstrated His love while we were yet sinners.
- (14) It is desirable that a minister, before baptizing a child, engage in instructions and discussion with the parents, to acquaint them with the covenant responsibilities which are laid upon them.<sup>196</sup>
- (15) When a child is presented for baptism at a service of public worship, at least one parent, or one rightly exercising parental authority, shall be asked to give

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191 Gen. 17:10-13, I Cor. 7:14.

192 FOG XI.B.2.c.

193 Gen. 17:12, Lev. 12:1-3.

194 Matt. 28:18-19; Acts 2:38, 15:5-29; I Cor. 7:18; Col. 2:11-12.

195 Acts 2:38; 16:15, 33.

196 Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:4-9, 11:18-25; Ps. 78:5-8; Eph. 6:4.

affirmative answer to the following or equivalent questions:

- (a) *Do you renew the vows which you made when you received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and entered into the full communion of this Church?*
- (b) *Do you acknowledge that your child is a sinner in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit?*
- (c) *Do you claim God's covenant promises on this child's behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for this child's salvation, as you do for your own?*
- (d) *Do you now covenant and promise in humble reliance on the grace of God to bring up your child to love God and to serve Him, to the end that your child may come to commit his life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?*

- (16) Because the child who is baptized is thereby marked as belonging to God and welcomed into His household, it is fitting that members of the congregation promise to surround the child with concern and love in Christ,<sup>197</sup> that he may continue in the fellowship of the Church, and be guided to confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, that he might live in His eternal kingdom.<sup>198</sup> The congregation\* shall be asked to give affirmative response to the following or equivalent question:

- (a) *Do you the members of this congregation undertake with these parents the covenant responsibility for the Christian nurture of this child?*

\* The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church does not recognize sponsors customarily called Godparents.

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197 John 13:34-35.

198 Gal. 6:1-2; Heb. 3:12-13, 10:23-25, 12:15-17.

- (17) The minister shall then baptize the child in the manner set forth above.<sup>199</sup> The sacrament shall conclude with prayer for the child, the parents, and all those in the household of faith.
- (18) At the time of baptism the child shall be recorded as a baptized, non-communicant member of the Church.<sup>200</sup>

c. The Sacrament of The Lord's Supper

*The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with Him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.*<sup>201</sup>

- (1) The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a means of grace by which God makes provision for the ongoing spiritual nourishment of His people.<sup>202</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ is spiritually present in the sacrament,<sup>203</sup> and they who partake by faith truly and spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified<sup>204</sup> and all benefits of His death.<sup>205</sup> Through this means of grace God sustains and enriches His people in fellowship and unity with their crucified and risen Lord,<sup>206</sup> providing them a foretaste of eternal fellowship with Him.<sup>207</sup>
- (2) The sacrament witnesses primarily to the power of God's love for His sinful people in the death and

199 See (5) and (6) above.

200 FOG V.A.2.

201 LC Q. 168.

202 COF XXIX.I.

203 I Cor. 10:16, COF XXIX.VII, LC Q. 170.

204 John 6:26-59, LC Q. 170.

205 COF XXIX.VII. SC Qs. 29-38 and LC Qs. 57-90 give a full discussion of these benefits.

206 SC Q. 96; LC Qs. 168, 177.

207 Matt. 26:29, Mark 12:25, Luke 22:18.

resurrection of His Son and the promise of His grace to all who believe.<sup>208</sup> It also provides a means whereby His children show forth their faith in God by offering themselves to Him in love and praise.<sup>209</sup>

- (3) The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is an act of covenant renewal for the people of God.<sup>210</sup> It is the bond and pledge of their union with Christ, and with each other, as members of His mystical body.<sup>211</sup> It should therefore be administered as part of the public worship of God,<sup>212</sup> and only by an ordained minister of the Word.<sup>213</sup> It should be preceded by the reading and preaching of the Word that the sacramental Word may be shown forth in full unity with the written and preached Word of the Covenant Lord.<sup>214</sup>
- (4) The Table is none other than Christ's Table. The words of institution set forth the sacrament as originating in Christ's command.<sup>215</sup> They make plain that those worshipping have been invited and called by Christ Himself, and therefore come in obedience to His will. He calls to Himself all who labor and are heavy laden, saying He will give them rest.<sup>216</sup> He calls them to repent, and turn again, that their sins might be blotted out, and that times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord.<sup>217</sup> He calls them to taste and see that the Lord is good, and that blessed are all who take refuge in Him.<sup>218</sup>
- (5) In the name of Christ, and by His mercy and love, the minister shall call to partake in the sacrament all who humbly place their trust in Christ, are truly sorry for their sins, and by His help endeavor to lead a holy life.

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208 Rom. 5:6-11, I Cor. 11:23-26.

209 Luke 22:14-20, I Cor. 11:23-26.

210 COF XXIX.I, LC Q. 168.

211 I Cor. 10:16-17, COF XXIX.I.

212 Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:18, 20, 33.

213 COF XXVII.IV, XXIX.III; LC Q. 169; FOG X.B.1.a.

214 Exod. 24, Neh. 8-10, Acts 20:7.

215 Luke 22:19, I Cor. 11:23-26.

216 Matt. 11:28-29.

217 Acts 3:19-20.

218 Ps. 34:8.

- (a) Those who have been baptized and have made profession of faith and have entered into communion with Christ in the visible Church shall be invited to participate. They should be encouraged to come in full dependence upon the grace of God in Christ, and upon the power of the Holy Spirit, and be reminded that in Christ they are made worthy to come.<sup>219</sup> They should be encouraged to examine themselves concerning their spiritual need, their faith in Jesus Christ, and their intention to be obedient to Him. They should be encouraged to pray for renewal and growth in their whole spiritual life.<sup>220</sup>
- (b) Those who belong to Christ in the visible Church, and yet have doubts about partaking of the sacrament, shall be encouraged to come despite their doubts. For if they sincerely desire to be in Christ, and to be delivered from sin, that they might lead a holy life, the Lord's Supper has been appointed for their spiritual comfort and strengthening, that they might grow up into a full assurance of salvation.<sup>221</sup>
- (c) Those who are impenitent should be warned against partaking of the sacrament while still holding fast to their sins; lest they partake in an unworthy manner, and eat and drink judgment on themselves.<sup>222</sup>
- (d) Those who are not members of the visible Church and others who should not partake of the sacrament may be invited to remain during the administration of the sacrament. They should be encouraged to meditate prayerfully upon the gracious offer of salvation in the Gospel and their own spiritual need.

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219 Rom. 5:6, II Cor. 5:21.

220 I Cor. 11:28, SC Q. 97, FOG V.C.1.a. For further help on this, see LC Qs. 171-177.

221 LC Q. 172.

222 I Cor. 11:27-29, LC Q. 173.

- (6) The words of institution are to be read and the service shall follow the New Testament pattern.<sup>223</sup> There should be a prayer of consecration and thanksgiving,<sup>224</sup> asking that God set apart these common elements of bread and wine for the holy purpose for which He has appointed them, and thanking Him for the gracious revelation of His love in Christ and the full provision made for so rich a salvation. The minister shall take and break the bread, and afterwards take the cup, and distribute both to the congregation.<sup>225</sup> Normally, ruling elders assist the minister in the distribution, for they share with him the keys of the kingdom.<sup>226</sup> The congregation may partake of the elements as each is distributed; or wait until all have been served, that all might commune together. A prayer of thanksgiving may be offered when all have partaken. Reverent disposition shall be made of the elements following the service.
- (7) The session of each congregation shall determine how frequently the sacrament is provided.<sup>227</sup> It should be provided regularly enough that it is seen both as belonging to the ordinary parts of the worship of God by His people<sup>228</sup> and as beneficial for their spiritual nourishment.<sup>229</sup>
- (8) While the sacrament, being an act of the whole Church, is ordinarily to be celebrated in public worship with the participation of the full congregation, there may be occasions when the session or other church courts are persuaded of sufficient reason for its celebration at other services of worship. Such celebrations should be understood, not as private ceremonies, but as belonging to the public worship of the whole people of God.<sup>230</sup>

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223 Matt. 26:20-30, Mark 14:17-26, Luke 22:14-20, I Cor. 11:23-32, COF XXIX.III, LC Q. 169.

224 Matt. 26:26-27, Mark 14:22-23.

225 Matt. 26:26-27, Mark 14:22-23, Luke 22:19-20, LC Q. 169.

226 COF XXX.

227 FOG XI.B.2.k.

228 See DPW V.A.2 for the definition of the *ordinary* parts of worship.

229 LC Q. 177, "...whereas the Lord's Supper is to be administered often...as spiritual nourishment to the soul."

230 COF XXIX.IV.

- (9) In the case of those who are physically unable to attend public worship, the sacrament may be taken to them.<sup>231</sup> If possible, there should be present at the celebration officers and other members of the congregation in addition to the minister, to show forth the communal nature of the Sacrament.

## 9. BENEDICTIONS

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*<sup>232</sup>

- a. From ancient times it has been the practice of priests, prophets, and patriarchs to pronounce blessing upon people in the name of the Lord. Melchizedek blessed Abraham in the name of the Lord.<sup>233</sup> Isaac blessed Jacob.<sup>234</sup> Jacob blessed his sons<sup>235</sup> and the sons of Joseph.<sup>236</sup> At Sinai God appointed His priests to bless the whole people of God, putting His name upon them.<sup>237</sup>
- b. The New Testament continues this practice. At His ascension, our Lord Himself lifted His hands to bless His people.<sup>238</sup> Several New Testament epistles close with such pronouncements of blessing.<sup>239</sup>
- c. Therefore it is fitting that ministers of the Word conclude public worship with a benediction. The priestly benediction of the Old Testament,<sup>240</sup> the apostolic Trinitarian benediction of the New Testament,<sup>241</sup> or other Scriptural benedictions may be used.
- d. *Benedictions*, which are words of blessing from God to His people, should not be confused with *ascriptions*, which are words of praise and blessing for God offered by His people.<sup>242</sup>

231 COF Note (h).

232 II Cor. 13:14 (ESV).

233 Gen. 14:19-20.

234 Gen. 27:27-29.

235 Gen. 49:1-27.

236 Gen. 48:1-22.

237 Numbers 6:22-27. See also Lev. 9:22, Deut. 21:5.

238 Luke 24:50-51.

239 II Cor. 13:14, Heb. 13:20-21, I Pet. 5:14b.

240 Numbers 6:23-24.

241 II Cor. 13:14.

242 Rom. 16:25-27, Jude 24-25.

Ascriptions may be offered by any and by all, as praise and adoration to God. Some benedictions are framed as prayers,<sup>243</sup> and as prayers, they may be prayed by any and all, as our words spoken to God. But benedictions are official declarations from God Himself, given through His appointed messengers, to His people, to grant them blessing. Only duly ordained ministers of the Word may pronounce benedictions.

### C. OCCASIONAL PARTS AND SPECIAL SERVICES

*. . . besides religious oaths and vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner.*<sup>244</sup>

#### 1. OATHS AND VOWS

*Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed.*<sup>245</sup>

- a. The solemn swearing of oaths and the making or renewing of vows are parts of the public worship of God.<sup>246</sup> It is appropriate, for example, that when ordained and installed into church office, or when entering into marriage, that the oaths and vows be taken in public. Yet it is always to be remembered that the oath is sworn and the vow is made to God, and in the name of God. Such oaths and vows are to be kept in all faithfulness, relying upon the grace of God, remembering that the Lord does not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.<sup>247</sup>

#### 2. FASTINGS

*Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.*<sup>248</sup>

243 Rom. 15:5-6, 13, 33.

244 COF XXI.V.

245 Ps. 65:1 (ESV).

246 Num. 30, COF XXII.

247 Exod. 20:7, Eccl. 5:1-7.

248 Joel 1:14 (ESV).

- a. Fasting is abstaining from food and/or other comforts for a season for the purpose of devoting oneself more completely to God in search of blessing, relief of affliction, intercession for others, or other purposes.<sup>249</sup> As much as can conveniently be done, the time of fasting should be spent in private and public reading of the Scriptures, attending to the preaching of the word, singing of praise, and especially in praying to God concerning the purpose of the fast.<sup>250</sup>

### 3. THANKSGIVINGS

*Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to the children of men!*<sup>251</sup>

- a. As we are at all times to give thanks to God for all that we have and are, so it is particularly fitting that, upon receiving special favor from God, times of thanksgiving be set apart.<sup>252</sup> Special services of worship may be held, wherein the Psalms and hymns that are sung, the prayers that are offered, and the Word that is preached are made suitable for the occasion.

### 4. SPECIAL OCCASIONS

*I will remember the works of the LORD: Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.*<sup>253</sup>

- a. From ancient times the people of God have appointed special occasions<sup>254</sup> for remembering and observing the great works of God,<sup>255</sup> and for calling upon God in times of special need.<sup>256</sup> Through the ages the Church has also appointed special days for remembering and rejoicing in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; His death, resurrection, and ascension; and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There may also be days recommended for recalling the heritage of the Church, proclaiming its mission, and forwarding its work.

249 Joel 2:15-17, I Cor. 7:5.

250 II Chron. 20:3, Esth. 4:16, Isa. 58:6-12.

251 Ps. 107:8 (ESV).

252 Esth. 9:17-32, Ps. 107.

253 Ps. 77:11.

254 COF XXI.V.

255 Esth. 9:16-28; John 10:22; Acts 4:23-31, 12:5.

256 I Chron. 20:1-30; Acts 4:23-31, 12:5.

All of these may be observed in the public worship of God on the Lord's Day.

- b. It is also appropriate that a weekday may be appointed by the session, presbytery, or General Synod for gathering the people of God to pray, offer praise and thanksgiving, make confession of sins, inaugurate or complete a fast, or for hearing the Word of God.<sup>257</sup>
- c. If at any time the civil authorities should appoint a fast or thanksgiving, the Church should consider paying due respect, ordinarily through a service of public worship. The prayers, the music, the selection of Scripture, and the message should be especially selected for the occasion.
- d. While worship on the Lord's Day is a duty one owes to God, observing special occasions of worship is not obligatory and in such matters the believer's conscience is not bound.<sup>258</sup>

## 5. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

*... a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*<sup>259</sup>

- a. Marriage has been instituted by God as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman.<sup>260</sup> God has established marriage for the mutual help and companionship of husband and wife,<sup>261</sup> for the increase of mankind with descendants<sup>262</sup> and the Church with a holy seed,<sup>263</sup> and for prevention of immorality.<sup>264</sup> It is an earthly image of the heavenly union between Christ and His Church.<sup>265</sup> Jesus Christ blessed this relationship by His presence at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee.<sup>266</sup> Those who enter into marriage are to pledge their love and fidelity to each other, as long as they both shall live.<sup>267</sup>

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257 Neh. 8-10.

258 COF XX.II.

259 Gen. 2:24 (ESV).

260 Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5-6, COF XXIV.

261 Gen. 2:18, Eph. 5:22-33.

262 Gen. 1:28.

263 Mal. 2:14-15.

264 I Cor. 7:2.

265 Eph. 5:32.

266 John 2:1-11.

267 Matt. 19:5-6, Rom. 7:2-3.

- b. It is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. In Christian marriage both the bride and the groom are to be professing Christians, and share a common Christian faith.<sup>268</sup>
- c. Before any man and woman are joined in Christian marriage they shall fulfill all the lawful requirements of the state in which the marriage is to be performed.<sup>269</sup> The minister shall counsel with the couple to assess whether they are prepared to enter into marriage with maturity and wisdom.
- d. If, after counseling, the minister is not convinced in his conscience of the propriety of the marriage under the laws of the state and of Holy Scripture, as interpreted in *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*, he shall not perform the ceremony.
- e. A Christian marriage ceremony may be ordered as a service of worship before God. When it is, it should be conducted in conformity with the Scriptural principles governing worship, outlined elsewhere in this directory. As in all services of worship, reverence shall be expected on the part of all present. Any music included in the service must be fitting and appropriate for a service of worship to God. When it is conducted in the house of God, the service of worship shall be under the authority of the minister and the session.<sup>270</sup>
- f. The order for a Christian marriage service of worship shall include a brief statement of the Biblical meaning of marriage. There shall be prayers for the couple as they enter their new estate. The man and the woman shall make vows in accordance with the Biblical teaching on marriage.<sup>271</sup> There may be an exchange of rings, or the giving of a ring to the woman by the man. There may be a charge to them, laying before them the privileges and obligations which they are about to receive and undertake. There shall be a declaration by the minister that the man and woman standing before him are now joined in marriage according to the ordinance

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268 1 Cor. 7:39.

269 Rom. 13:1-7, 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

270 See FOG XI.B.2.k.

271 Gen. 2:24-25; Deut. 24:1-4; Mal. 2:10-16; Matt. 5:31-32, 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; COF XXII and XXIV; DPW V.C.1.

of God and the law of the state. The service shall conclude with a benediction.

- g. The minister shall comply with all requirements of the state for the proper performance and registration of the marriage. He shall also see that the Church maintains an adequate record of all marriages within the congregation.

## 6. FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES

*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*<sup>272</sup>

- a. In the presence of death, Christians witness to their faith that God, in Jesus Christ, has conquered death and raises His people from death to life eternal. In order that those who are bereaved may find strength and comfort in the presence of God,<sup>273</sup> and support from the people of God, it is appropriate that a service of worship be held. When a service of worship is held, it should be conducted by a minister and shall be under the authority of the minister and the session. A service held in a church provides the best setting for turning the hearts of those bereaved to the comfort of God to be found in Christ, but circumstances may suggest another setting.
- b. The funeral or memorial service should be conducted with dignity in consideration of the life and circumstances of the deceased, and the pastoral needs of the family, congregation, and community. As our Lord Himself wept at the grave of Lazarus, beholding the tears of Mary and the others,<sup>274</sup> so it is appropriate that due place be given for the grief which is present when a loved one dies.<sup>275</sup>
- c. The worship service must include a witness to the resurrection and the promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Believers have the sure and certain hope that Jesus Christ has conquered death,<sup>276</sup> has gone to prepare a place for them,

272 Ps. 116:15.

273 Ps. 23.

274 John 11:36.

275 Rom. 12:15, I Thess. 4:13.

276 I Cor. 15:54-57, II Tim. 1:8-10.

and will come again to receive them to Himself, that where He is they may be also.<sup>277</sup> Assurance should be given that when believers are absent from the body, they are present with the Lord,<sup>278</sup> awaiting the blessed day of Christ's return when all who are in their tombs will hear the voice of the Son of Man, and those who have believed will come forth to the resurrection of life.<sup>279</sup>

- d. The worship service should include the reading of appropriate passages from the Holy Scripture and the offering of prayers of thanksgiving, intercession, and supplication. Personal remarks about the deceased may be made to give honor to whom honor is due, and thanksgiving to God for benefits received and a good example given, as appropriate in each case. However, due care should always be taken to keep the focus of the service on God, who helps and comforts those who grieve, and to whom alone all praise belongs. Intercessions should not be offered in behalf of the dead, nor attempts made to speak to the dead. If songs or other music are included, they should be appropriate for the worship of God. When the casket is present, it should remain closed during the worship in order that those present may more completely be directed to God. The service should be closed with a benediction unless followed by a service of committal to which all are invited.
- e. The service of committal should be done with Scripture and prayer, and the service closed with a benediction.

## 7. ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

*These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*<sup>280</sup>

- a. The only King and Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all power in heaven and on earth has been given by God the Father.<sup>281</sup> Being exalted to the right hand

<sup>277</sup> John 14:2-3.

<sup>278</sup> Luke 23:42-43, II Cor. 5:8.

<sup>279</sup> John 5:25-29.

<sup>280</sup> Acts 6:6 (ESV).

<sup>281</sup> FOG I.A.1.

of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,<sup>282</sup> Christ has given gifts to His Church that some might be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.<sup>283</sup> By His apostles He has also provided for elders to rule<sup>284</sup> and deacons to serve<sup>285</sup> in the Church, and for setting them apart by prayer and the laying on of hands.<sup>286</sup>

- b. Ordination is the solemn act of setting apart a person to a church office by a court of the Church having authority to do so.<sup>287</sup> In the case of ministers, it is performed by a presbytery.<sup>288</sup> In case of ruling elders and deacons in a congregation, it is normally performed by the session of the local church,<sup>289</sup> or by presbytery in special cases.<sup>290</sup>
- c. Installation is the solemn act of placing in office those who have been elected and lawfully ordained to the office. Those who are installed in an office to which they have previously been ordained are not ordained again.<sup>291</sup> Ordination to an office is for life, unless the officer is released from the office<sup>292</sup> or is deposed by a process of discipline.<sup>293</sup>
- d. Ordination and installation of church officers shall take place in a service of public worship, conducted by the appropriate court of the Church in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Those who are ordained to office shall solemnly promise to maintain the doctrine, government, discipline, and worship of the Church, by giving affirmative response to the questions found in the Form of Government.<sup>294</sup> Those being installed in an office to which they have previously been ordained shall be asked to reaffirm their vows.<sup>295</sup>

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282 Acts 2:33.

283 Eph. 4:11.

284 Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-7, 5:17; Titus 1:5-9.

285 Acts 6:1-6, Phil. 1:1, I Tim. 3:8-13.

286 Acts 6:6; I Tim. 4:14, 5:22.

287 FOG VI.

288 FOG XII.B.2.k.

289 XI.B.2.f.

290 FOG III.C.6-12, XII.2.c, XII.2.s.

291 FOG IX.E.1-4.

292 BOD VIII.A.3, B.1.

293 FOG IX.B.1.

294 FOG IX.D.3, X.D.2.g.

295 Previously ordained ministers shall renew all their vows (FOG X.D.3.e). Previously ordained ruling elders and deacons are required to assume the obligations in Questions 5 through 7 (FOG IX.E.3).

- e. At each service of ordination/installation to office in a local church, the members of the congregation shall be asked to acknowledge and receive these officers, and promise to give them all the honor, obedience, encouragement, and assistance in the spirit of love to which their office entitles them, according to the Word of God<sup>296</sup> and *The Standards of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*.<sup>297</sup>
- f. When all the questions have been answered affirmatively, the one(s) to be ordained should (if able) kneel for the ordination, while the ministers and ruling elders of the court lay their hands upon the person(s) and the ordination prayer is offered.<sup>298</sup> Following the prayer, it is fitting for the apostolic Trinitarian benediction<sup>299</sup> to be pronounced upon those who have been ordained.
- g. When the ordination/installation has been completed, the presiding officer shall declare in the name of Christ that the officer(s) has (have) been duly ordained and/or installed in the sacred office to which he (they) has (have) been called, using the formula found in the Form of Government.<sup>300</sup>
- h. A charge to the officers shall be given regarding their Christian responsibilities to the Lord, to each other, and to the Church.<sup>301</sup>

## 8. COMMISSIONINGS

*. . . he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.*<sup>302</sup>

- a. A commissioning, which is distinct from ordination to church office, is the solemn recognition of a person as set apart for a

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296 I Cor. 9:1-14, 16:15-16; I Thess. 5:12-13; I Tim. 5:17-20; Heb. 13:17; III John 5-8.

297 FOG IX.D.4, X.D.3.f.

298 FOG VI, IX.D.5, X.D.2.h.

299 II Cor. 13:14.

300 FOG IX.D.6 for ruling elders and deacons; FOG X.D.2.i, X.D.3.g for ministers.

301 II Tim. 4:1-5, FOG IX.D.6, X.D.3.h.

302 II Cor. 8:19 (ESV).

particular work of ministry.<sup>303</sup> The ministry in view may be of a continuing nature, as in the appointment of a missionary, a church counselor, or a director of music, Christian education, women's, youth, or children's ministry. The ministry may also be of a temporary nature, as in short-term missionary service.

- b. A service of commissioning may be held in a worship service. Appropriate prayers and a charge to the one(s) being commissioned should be included.

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*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*<sup>304</sup>

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303 Possible New Testament examples may be found in I Cor. 16:3 and II Cor. 8:23.

304 Heb. 12:28-29 (ESV).

## SAMPLE REFORMED ORDERS OF WORSHIP

NOTE: *The following orders of service are offered as historical examples of those which have been used in Reformed churches from the time of Calvin to the present. The list should not be understood as providing a complete selection of orders which have been approved by the General Synod for use in Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches. None have been approved in that sense.*

John Calvin's *Form of Church Prayers*,  
1540s Strasbourg (S)/Geneva (G)\*

John Knox's *The Forme of Prayers*,  
1556\*\*

Scripture Sentence  
Confession of Sin  
Scripture: Words of Assurance (S)  
Absolution of Sin (S)  
Metrical Psalm (G) or Metrical  
Decalogue (S)  
Prayer for Illumination  
Scripture Reading  
Sermon  
Pastoral Prayer including long  
paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer  
The Apostles' Creed sung while  
elements prepared  
Words of Institution  
Exhortation to worthy participation  
Prayer of Consecration and  
Thanksgiving  
The Minister partakes, then  
distributes  
The Communion at the table while  
singing metrical Psalm or reading  
Scripture  
Post-Communion Thanksgiving  
Metrical *Nunc Dimittis* (S)  
Benediction

Confession of Sin  
Prayer for Pardon  
Metrical Psalm  
Prayer for Illumination  
Scripture Reading  
Sermon  
[Collection of Alms]  
Thanksgiving and Intercessions  
The Lord's Prayer  
The Apostles' Creed  
Offertory- elements prepared  
while singing metrical Psalm  
Words of Institution  
Exhortation to worthy  
participation  
Prayer of Consecration  
Adoration  
Thanksgiving for creation/  
redemption  
Anamnesis (remembrance)  
Doxology  
The Minister partakes, then  
distributes  
The Communion around the table  
while reading Scripture  
("the Passion")  
Post-Communion Thanksgiving  
Metrical Psalm 103  
Benediction

\*Communion was not practiced weekly

\*\*Communion was not practiced  
frequently

Westminster *Directory for Public Worship*, 1644\*<sup>1</sup>

Call to Worship  
 Opening Prayer: Adoration and  
 for Blessing  
 Old Testament Reading  
 New Testament Reading  
 Metrical Psalm  
 Prayer of Confession and Petition  
 Sermon  
 Pastoral Prayer  
 The Lord's Prayer  
 Metrical Psalm  
 Exhortation, Warning, and  
 Invitation  
 Words of Institution  
 Prayer of Consecration and  
 Thanksgiving  
 The Minister partakes, then  
 distributes  
 The Communion "at or about"  
 the table  
 Post-Communion Exhortation  
 Post-Communion Thanksgiving  
 Collection for the Poor  
 Benediction

\*Communion was not practiced weekly

*The Book of Common Worship*, 1946,  
 "First Order"<sup>\*\*1</sup>

Call to Worship  
 Adoration  
 Confession of Sin  
 Assurance of Pardon  
 Psalter (Chanted, Read, Sung)  
 First Scripture Reading  
 Hymn or Anthem  
 Second Scripture Reading  
 The Apostles' Creed (or Nicene)  
 Hymn or Anthem  
 Prayer of Thanksgiving, etc.  
 The Lord's Prayer  
 Offering  
 Doxology, Response or Prayer of  
 Dedication  
 Hymn or Anthem  
 Sermon  
 Hymn  
 Benediction

\*\*None of the five standard orders of worship is a communion service

1 For this and the previous two liturgies, see Bard Thompson, ed., *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1980) and William D. Maxwell, *A History of Christian Worship* (Baker Book House, 1982).

1 *The Book of Common Worship* (The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1946).

*The Worshipbook, 1970*<sup>\*1</sup>

Call to Worship  
 Confession of Sin  
 Declaration of Pardon  
 The Gloria Patri  
 Prayer for Illumination  
 Old Testament Lesson  
 Psalm, Hymn, Anthem  
 New Testament Lesson  
 Sermon  
 The Creed  
 Prayers of the People  
 The Peace  
 Offerings  
 Hymn or Doxology  
 Invitation to the Lord's Table  
 The Thanksgiving  
 Words of Institution  
 The Minister partakes, then  
 distributes  
 The Communion while people sing/  
 say Psalms or Hymns of praise  
 Post-Communion Thanksgiving  
 Hymn  
 Dismissal/Charge  
 Benediction

\*Order with Communion is the first order given

*The Book of Common Worship, 1993*<sup>\*\*1</sup>

Gathering  
 Call to Worship  
 Prayer of the Day  
 Hymn of Praise  
 Confession of Sin  
 Declaration of Forgiveness  
 The Peace  
 Canticle, Psalm, Hymn  
 Prayer for Illumination  
 First Reading  
 Psalm  
 Second Reading  
 Anthem, Hymn, Psalm  
 Gospel Reading  
 Sermon  
 Invitation  
 Affirmation of Faith  
 [Hymn or Concerns of the Church]  
 Prayers of the People  
 [The Peace]  
 Offerings  
 Invitation to the Lord's Table  
 The Thanksgiving  
 Words of Institution  
 Fraction and Distribution  
 The Communion while people sing  
 Psalms or Hymns, Read Scripture,  
 or Pray  
 Post Communion Thanksgiving  
 Hymn, Canticle, or Psalm  
 Dismissal/Charge  
 Benediction

\*\*Standard service is a communion service

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1 *The Worshipbook* (Westminster Press, 1970).

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1 *The Book of Common Worship* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).