

Directory for the Public Worship of God

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

71
 72 Other imperative forms occur in the *Directory*, and sometimes the forms in the list above are varied by modifying
 73 words or are put in the negative, either of which alters their force. For example, “may not” and “may only” are
 74 mandatory prohibitions, even though “may” is permissive. The meaning of these additional and altered forms is to
 75 be determined by the rules of English usage, with due respect to the distinctions outlined above.

76
 77 The Suggested Forms for Particular Services are by definition, suggested. The distinctions outlined above do not
 78 apply to the Suggested Forms.

79
 80 Scripture quotations in the *Directory* and the *Suggested Forms* are drawn from the King James Version with a few
 81 variations, indicated by brackets, where deemed advisable for current understanding, without prejudice to other
 82 translations. In the use of the *Directory*, any accurate, faithful translation may be substituted.

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CHAPTER I

87

THE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

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

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

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

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

2. In his Word, God has specially appointed one day in seven as a Sabbath to be kept holy to him. It is the duty of every one to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ the Sabbath was the last day of the week, marking the completion of six days of work, anticipating eternal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 166 2. Because Christ is the Mediator of the covenant, no one draws near to God except through him alone.
 167
 168 a. God's people enter the Most Holy Place, the heavenly sanctuary, by the redeeming blood of Jesus, by the
 169 new and living way opened for them through the curtain, that is, his flesh. They draw near through him as their great
 170 high priest who has not entered a man-made sanctuary but heaven itself, now to appear for them in God's presence.
 171
 172 b. Public worship is to be conducted in a manner that plainly expresses conscious reliance upon the mediation
 173 and merits of Jesus Christ. To this end, it is well that there be a prayer of confession of sin early in the worship
 174 service. It is fitting that the minister, as God's ambassador, then declare an assurance of God's grace in Christ,
 175 reminding each worshiper that he can have boldness to approach the holy God only through the mediation and
 176 merits of Jesus Christ.
 177
- 178 3. By the Spirit of the exalted Christ, God draws near to his people and they draw near to their God. They come by
 179 grace to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, joining innumerable angels and all the people of God in joyous and
 180 reverent communion with him.
 181
 182 a. God's people not only are to come into his presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of his perfect
 183 holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness, but also are to enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts
 184 with praise for the great salvation that he has so graciously wrought for them through his only begotten Son and
 185 which he applies to them by his Holy Spirit. All are therefore to worship with sincere devotion, reverence, and
 186 expectation.
 187
 188 b. Public worship is to be conducted in reliance on the gracious working of the Spirit of the exalted Christ,
 189 which alone can make anyone capable of such sincerity, reverence, devotion, awe, expectation, and joy. Hence, from
 190 its beginning to its end, public worship should be conducted in that simplicity which manifests dependence on the
 191 Spirit of Christ to bless his own ordinances.
 192
 193 c. Accordingly, the whole congregation should assemble promptly, that all may be present and may join
 194 together for the entire worship service. Unless necessary, none should depart until after the benediction. All should
 195 refrain from any behavior that would distract other worshipers or detract from their communion with God.
 196
- 197 4. In public worship, God's people draw near to their God unitedly as his covenant people, the body of Christ.
 198
 199 a. For this reason the covenant children should be present so far as possible as well as adults. Because God
 200 makes his covenant with believers and their children, families should be taught and encouraged to sit together as
 201 families.
 202
 203 b. For the same reason no favoritism may be shown to any who attend. Nor may any member of the church
 204 presume to exalt himself above others as though he were more spiritual, but each shall esteem others better than
 205 himself.
 206
 207 c. The unity and catholicity of the covenant people are to be manifest in public worship. Accordingly, the
 208 service is to be conducted in a manner that enables and expects all the members of the covenant community—male
 209 and female, old and young, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, healthy and infirm, people from every race and
 210 nation—to worship together.
 211
 212 d. Because God's people worship not as an aggregation of individuals, but as a congregation of those who are
 213 members of one another in Christ, public worship is to be conducted as a corporate activity in which all the members
 214 participate as the body of Christ.
 215
- 216 5. The triune God assembles his covenant people for public worship in order to manifest and renew their covenant
 217 bond with him and one another. The Holy Spirit engages them and draws them into the Father's presence as a living
 218 sacrifice in Christ. God himself has fellowship with them, strengthening and guiding them for life in his presence
 219 and service in his kingdom.
 220

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

226
 227 b. Consequently, it is well that public worship be so conducted that it is apparent that God summons his
 228 church to assemble in his presence, that he assures his people of his receiving and cleansing them through Christ the
 229 Mediator, that he consecrates them to himself and his service by his Word, that he communes with them and gives
 230 them grace to help in time of need through his means of grace, and that he sends them out to serve with his blessing.

231
 232 6. The triune God reveals the way of knowing and worshiping him in his Word, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and
 233 New Testaments, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

234
 235 a. The principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible – either as they are expressly set down in
 236 Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture – and from no other source.

237
 238 b. God may not be worshiped according to human imaginations or inventions or in any way not prescribed by
 239 his Word, nor may the church require her members to participate in elements of worship that God’s Word does not
 240 require. Only when the elements of worship are those appointed in God’s Word, and the circumstances and forms of
 241 worship are consonant with God’s Word, is there true freedom to know God as he is and to worship him as he
 242 desires to be worshiped.

243
 244 7. The end of public worship is the glory of the triune God. To that end, Christ builds his church by perfecting the
 245 saints and adding to its membership such as are being saved—all to the glory of God.

246
 247 a. Through public worship on the Lord’s Day, God calls his people to serve him all the days of the week in their
 248 every activity, and enables them, whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.

249
 250 b. God’s people are to be led to engage in all the elements of worship with a single-minded focus on God’s
 251 glory and with a humble and dependent expectation that the exalted Lord Jesus Christ himself will edify them and
 252 build his church through his appointed means of grace— all to the glory of God.

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255 C. The Parts of Public Worship

256
 257 1. Because a service of public worship is in its essence a meeting of the triune God with his chosen people, a
 258 worship service consists of two principal parts: those elements which are performed on behalf of God (through a
 259 representative voice) and those elements which are performed by the congregation (through their own or a
 260 representative voice).

261
 262 a. By his Spirit working through the ministry of the Word, God addresses his people in the call to worship, in
 263 the salutation and benediction, in the reading and preaching of the Word, and in the sacraments.

264
 265 b. His people, enabled by the Holy Spirit, address God in prayer, in song, in offerings, in hearing the Word, in
 266 confession, and in receiving and partaking of the sacraments.

267
 268 c. It is advisable that these two parts be made to alternate.

269
 270 2. The triune God is not a passive spectator in public worship, but actively works in each element of the service of
 271 worship. Neither are the people of God to be passive spectators in public worship, but by faith are to participate
 272 actively in each element of the service of worship.

273
 274 a. Public worship should be conducted in a manner that enables and expects God’s people by faith actively to
 275 embrace the blessing of the Lord in the salutation and benediction; to pray with him who leads in prayer, so that the
 276 prayer being uttered aloud becomes their prayer; to attend, in the reading of God’s Word, to what God reveals of

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

281
 282 b. Accordingly, it is appropriate that worshipers at times respond with brief spoken or sung expressions of
 283 praise or affirmation such as “hallelujah” or “amen.” The former is a heartfelt declaration that the living God alone
 284 is worthy of adoration. The latter grows out of the responsibility of God’s people to affirm solemnly and earnestly
 285 the truthfulness of his Word and the permanence of his character. It is especially fitting for the congregation to join
 286 in an “amen” at such times as a response to a blessing, a Scripture reading, a psalm or hymn, a confession of faith, or
 287 a prayer. When believers sing or say “amen” they are testifying to their wholehearted agreement with what has been
 288 spoken as being in harmony with God’s permanently valid Word.
 289

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

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

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

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

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

314 b. Because musicians and musical instruments serve the part of worship that is performed by the
 315 congregation, it is ~~advisable~~ fitting that they be positioned with or behind the congregation.
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318 **D. The Oversight and Conduct of Public Worship**

319
 320 1. Public worship is Christian not only when the worshipers consciously recognize that Christ is the Mediator by
 321 whom alone they can come unto God but also when they honor the exalted Christ as the living and only Head of the
 322 church who rules over public worship.
 323

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

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

331 2. For this reason:
 332

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

358 ELEMENTS OF ORDINARY PUBLIC WORSHIP

359 A. The Part from God to the People

360 1. The Call to Worship

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

370 2. The Public Reading of God's Word

- 371 a. Because the hearing of God's Word is a means of grace, the public reading of the Holy Scriptures is an
372 essential element of public worship. He who performs this serves as God's representative voice. Thus it ordinarily
373 should be performed by a minister of the Word. Through this reading, God speaks directly to the congregation in his
374 own words. For this reason the reader should refrain from interspersing the reading of God's Word with human
375 comments. He should use an accurate, faithful translation in the language of the people. He should read clearly and
376 with understanding, and the congregation should attend to the reading with the deepest reverence.
377
378 b. It is desirable that portions from both the Old and New Testaments be read each Lord's Day. It is also well
379 that the law of God be read frequently.
380
381 c. The public reading of the Scriptures to the congregation is to be distinguished from the unison or
382 antiphonal reading of certain portions of Scripture by the minister and the congregation together. In the former God
383 addresses his people; in the latter God's people address their God, expressing in the words of Scripture their own
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388 contrition, adoration, gratitude, and other holy sentiments. The Psalms of Scripture are especially appropriate for this
 389 purpose.
 390

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

392
 393 a. The preaching of the Word, the power of God unto salvation, is indispensable in the public worship of God.
 394 It is therefore a matter of supreme importance that the minister preach only the Word of God, not the wisdom of
 395 man, and that he handle the Word of God correctly, always setting forth Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our
 396 faith. In the sermon God addresses the congregation by the mouth of his servant, and through his Spirit opens the
 397 ears of his people.
 398

399 b. The preacher shall prepare each sermon prayerfully and diligently. He may not use a text merely as a point
 400 of departure but must take pains to expound the chosen text, bringing in other texts as applicable, carefully
 401 explaining the meaning, and diligently applying the particular text(s) for the salvation and edification of his hearers.
 402 He should take care in preaching that his exposition and application of the Scriptures be clear and simple, having
 403 regard to the capacity of the hearers, in demonstration of the Spirit and power, with fervor and zeal, and that he not
 404 divorce Christian duty from Christian faith.
 405

406 The preacher must, as Christ's ambassador, seek to build up the saints in the most holy faith and beseech the
 407 unconverted to be reconciled to God. Nothing is more necessary than that the gospel of salvation by grace be
 408 proclaimed without any adulteration or compromise, in order that the hearers may learn to rely for salvation only on
 409 the grace of God in Christ, to the exclusion of their own works or character, ascribing all glory to God alone for their
 410 salvation. The preacher is to instruct his hearers in the whole counsel of God, exhort the congregation to more
 411 perfect obedience to Christ, and warn them of the sins and dangers that are around them and within them. A
 412 preacher fails to perform his task as a God-appointed watchman on Zion's walls who neglects to warn the
 413 congregation of prevalent soul-destroying teachings by enemies of the gospel.
 414

415 c. The session is to give diligence that no person enter the pulpit concerning whose soundness in doctrine and
 416 life, or knowledge of Scripture there is reasonable doubt.
 417

418 **4. The Sacraments**

419
 420 a. The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, as visible signs and seals of the Word of the covenant, are
 421 important elements of public worship. They represent Christ and his benefits, confirm his people's participation in
 422 him, visibly mark off from the world those who belong to his church, and solemnly bind them to covenant faith and
 423 loyalty.
 424

425 b. Because the sacraments are ordinances of Christ for the benefit of the visible church, they are to be
 426 administered only under the oversight of the government of the church. Moreover, in ordinary circumstances they
 427 are properly administered only in a gathering of the congregation for the public worship of God, baptism being a
 428 sacrament whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and the Lord's Supper
 429 signifying and sealing the communion of believers with Christ and with each other as members of his mystical body.
 430 Nevertheless, if a session judges that circumstances require otherwise, the sacraments may be administered
 431 elsewhere; but, in any event, the church must be represented in the service.
 432

433 c. Although the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the piety or intention of the person
 434 administering them, they are not to be administered by any private person but only by a minister of the Word.
 435

436 **5. Blessings**

437
 438 a. The salutation and the benediction are blessings pronounced in God's name and in his own words.
 439 Accordingly, they are properly used only in a gathering of Christ's church and by a minister of the Word.
 440

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

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

445
446 c. A benediction is the pronouncement of God's blessing upon his people at the conclusion of the worship
447 service. Words of benediction taken from Scripture are to be used. The high priestly benediction, "The LORD bless
448 thee [you], and keep thee [you]: the LORD make His face-shine upon thee [you], and be gracious unto thee [you]:
449 the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee [you], and give thee [you] peace," (Numbers 6:24-26) or the Trinitarian
450 apostolic benediction "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy
451 Ghost, be with you all "(2 Corinthians 13:14) are distinctly appropriate. If, however, the minister deems another
452 benediction taken from Scripture more fitting for a particular occasion, he may use it.

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

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457 **1. Public Prayer**

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

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

465
466

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

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

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479

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

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483

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

493
494

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

495
496

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

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

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

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

514 2. Congregational Singing

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

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

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

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

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

538 3. Public Confession of Faith

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

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

546 4. The Bringing of Offerings

547 a. The bringing of offerings in the public assembly of God’s people on the Lord’s Day is a solemn act of
 548 worship to almighty God. The people of God are to set aside to him the firstfruits of their labors; in so doing, they
 549 should present themselves with thanksgiving as a living sacrifice to God. All should participate in this act of worship
 550
 551
 552

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

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

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

568 d. It is desirable that Christian love be demonstrated by offerings for the use of the deacons in the ministry of
 569 mercy on behalf of the church. It is appropriate that a special offering be received for this purpose following the
 570 Lord's Supper.
 571

572
 573
 574

575 **CHAPTER III**

576 **THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS**

577 **A. General Provisions**

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

587 2. The baptism of infants is not to be unduly delayed, but is to be administered as soon as practicable. The baptism
 588 of adults must await their public profession of faith in Christ.
 589

590 3. The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated frequently, but the frequency may be determined by each session as it
 591 may judge most conducive to edification.
 592

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

600

601 **B. Baptism**

602 **1. The Baptism of Infants**

603 **a. Prerequisites**

604
 605
 606
 607

608
 609 For a child to be presented for baptism, at least one parent must be a communicant member of the Church, in good
 610 standing, normally of the local congregation. In order to present a child for baptism, parents shall make prior
 611 arrangements with the session. Before presentation for baptism, the session shall ensure that instruction has been
 612 given to the parent(s) as to the nature, privileges, and responsibilities of baptism for the parents and the child. Only
 613 parents who are communicant members of the Church may be permitted to take parental vows. If the session shall
 614 judge it appropriate, a parent who is not a communicant member may stand with the spouse during the baptism. In
 615 such a circumstance, it shall be the duty of the minister to inform the congregation of the situation, including that the
 616 one parent is not a member of this congregation and is not taking the vows. In extraordinary circumstances, at the
 617 parents' request, the session may permit the baptism of a child of parents who are communicant members of another
 618 church which is approved by the session, on behalf of and with the written permission of the governing body of that
 619 church. In such a case the session shall inform the other governing body, in writing, when the baptism has been
 620 administered.

621
 622 **b. The Administration of Baptism to Infants**

623
 624 **(1) The Institution of the Sacrament**

625
 626 The minister ought to read the words of the institution of the sacrament of baptism from a passage such as Matthew
 627 28:18–20.

628
 629 **(2) The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament**

630
 631 He shall first summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God and the Confession and
 632 Catechisms of this church as to the meaning and nature of the sacrament of baptism. In doing so, he may use these
 633 or like words:

634
 635 The Lord Jesus Christ instituted baptism as a covenant sign and seal for his church. He uses it not only for
 636 the solemn admission of the person who is baptized into the visible church, but also to depict and to
 637 confirm his ingrafting of that person into himself and his including that person in the covenant of grace.

638
 639 The Lord uses baptism to portray to us that we and our children are conceived and born in sin and need to
 640 be cleansed.

641
 642 He uses it to witness and seal to us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation
 643 through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the
 644 Spirit of Christ, together with our death unto sin and our resurrection unto newness of life by virtue of the
 645 death and resurrection of Christ. The time of the outward application of the sign does not necessarily
 646 coincide with the inward work of the Holy Spirit which the sign represents and seals to us. Because these
 647 gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the triune God, who is pleased to claim us as his very own,
 648 we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

649
 650 In our baptism the Lord puts his name on us, claims us as his own, and summons us to assume the
 651 obligations of the covenant. He calls us to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, to renounce the devil, the
 652 world, and the flesh, and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.

653
 654 **(3) Exhortation to the Congregation to Improve their Baptisms**

655
 656 Then the minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:

657
 658 As solemn vows are about to be made before you, and baptism is now to be administered, you who are
 659 baptized will do well to take this occasion to reflect on your own baptism. Christ has put his name and
 660 claim on you. He calls you to be repentant for your sins against your covenant God, to confess your faith
 661 before men, and to live in newness of life to God who sealed his covenant with you by the blood of his own
 662 Son.
 663

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

665
666 The minister shall then give instruction as to the ground of the baptism of infants. He may use these or like words:

667
668 Although our young children do not yet understand these things, they are nevertheless to be baptized. For
669 God commands that all who are under his covenant of grace be given the sign of the covenant.
670

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

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

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

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

693
694 The minister shall then require the parents to vow publicly their duty as Christian parents to present their children
695 for baptism and to nurture them in the Christian faith, by answering these or equivalent questions in the affirmative:
696

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

709 **(6) Prayer**

710
711 The minister shall then pray for the presence and blessing of the triune God that the grace signified and sealed by
712 baptism may be abundantly realized.
713

714 **(7) The Baptism**

715
716 Then, calling the child by name, he shall say, as he baptizes him with water, without adding any other ceremony:
717

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

720 **(8) The Covenant Commitment of the Congregation**

721

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

723

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

730

731 **(9) Charge**

732

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

734

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

741

742 **(10) Prayer**

743

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

747

748

749 **2. The Baptism of Adults**

750

751 **a. Prerequisites**

752

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

758

759 **b. The Administration of Baptism to Adults**

760

761 **(1) The Institution of the Sacrament**

762

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

765

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

767

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

770

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

776
777 To this end the minister shall require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by answering these or
778 equivalent questions in the affirmative:
779

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

829 (5) Prayer 830

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

833
834 **(6) The Baptism**

835
836 Then, calling the person by name, he shall baptize him with water, without any other ceremony, saying:

837
838 (Name of person), I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

839
840 **(7) The Covenant Commitment of the Congregation**

841
842 It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

843
844 As (name) is baptized into Christ and becomes a member of his visible church, the whole congregation is
845 obligated to receive (him/her). For “we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body,” and therefore are
846 members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to serve (him/her) in
847 love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by
848 godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

849
850
851 **(8) Welcome and Charge**

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

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

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

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

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

865
866 **(9) Prayer**

867
868 The whole service of baptism shall be concluded with prayer. It is well in such a prayer to thank the Lord for his
869 covenant of grace, rejoice that this (brother/sister) has been included, and to ask the Lord to graciously enable him to
870 be a covenant keeper, daily dying to sin and walking in newness of life in Christ.

871
872
873 **C. The Lord’s Supper**

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

876
877 The minister shall read the words of the institution and instruction of the Lord’s Supper as found in 1 Corinthians
878 11:23-29 or one of the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, or Luke 22:14-20). In addition he may
879 read words of instruction from passages such as John 6 and 1 Corinthians 10.

880
881 **2. The Meaning and Nature of the Sacrament**

882
883 He shall then summarize before the congregation the teaching of the Word of God as to the meaning and nature of
884 the sacrament in the following or like words:

885

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

901 3. Invitation and Fencing the Table

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

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

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

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

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

930 4. Exhortation

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

933
934
935
936
937
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941

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

947
 948 **5. Prayer**
 949

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

956
 957
 958 **6. Partaking of the Elements**
 959

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

961
 962 Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to
 963 his disciples, as I, ministering in his name, give this bread to you.

964
 965 The minister shall then break the bread and give it to the people. The bread may be eaten either upon reception of it,
 966 or in unison when all have been served, as the session may judge most conducive to edification. The minister may
 967 continue, saying:

968
 969 "Take, eat, this is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of me."
 970

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

973
 974 In the same manner, our Savior also took the cup, and having given thanks as has been done in his name, he
 975 gave it to his disciples, as I ministering in his name give this cup to you.

976
 977 The minister shall then give the cup as in the distribution of the bread. The minister may continue, saying:

978
 979 Our Lord Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of
 980 sins; drink of it all of you"

981
 982 **7. Response of Thanksgiving and Commitment**
 983

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

988
 989 It is well that the congregation respond by singing a psalm or hymn that focuses on the benefits of Christ's death and
 990 the triumph of the gospel, bringing forth gratitude and joy and renewed commitment of the believer to his Lord, and
 991 that an offering be taken for the relief of the poor or for some other sacred purpose.

992
 993 **8. Blessing**
 994

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

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

Chapter IV

Public Reception of Church Members

A. General Provisions

- 1011 1. Only those may be admitted to full communion in the church who have been baptized and have made public
 1012 profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
- 1013 2. In order to aid those who contemplate making public profession or reaffirmation of faith in Christ to understand
 1014 the implication of this significant act and to perform it meaningfully, the pastor or someone approved by the session
 1015 shall conduct classes in Christian doctrine and life both for the covenant youth and for any others who may manifest
 1016 an interest in the way of salvation.
- 1017 3. Before permitting anyone to make profession of his faith in the presence of the congregation, the session shall
 1018 announce his name to the congregation on a prior Lord’s Day in order that the members of the Church may have
 1019 opportunity to acquaint the session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a
 1020 credible profession. In order for the session to assure itself so far as possible that the candidate makes a credible
 1021 profession, it shall examine him to ascertain that he possesses the doctrinal knowledge requisite for saving faith in
 1022 the Lord Jesus Christ, relies on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian
 1023 life.
- 1024 4. In the public reception of church members, the minister shall follow the directions prescribed in this chapter,
 1025 but he is not required to use the exact language of the indented forms (below), which are suggested as appropriate.
 1026 He may employ these or similar forms, using his own liberty and godly wisdom as he deems best for the edification
 1027 of the people.
- 1028 5. The session shall always take special care to preserve the full meaning of membership vows. If the session
 1029 modifies the vows it shall record those vows and its rationale in its minutes and report it to the next stated meeting
 1030 of the presbytery.
- 1031 6. Unbaptized covenant children whose parent(s) are communicant members of the congregation may be received
 1032 only by baptism.
- 1033 7. Baptized children ordinarily shall be received as noncommunicant members when their parents are received as
 1034 communicant members..
- 1035 8. Noncommunicant members of the congregation may be received into communicant membership only by
 1036 confession of faith.
- 1037 9. The following provisions are designed to assist ministers and sessions to receive members in accordance with
 1038 the Book of Discipline II.B.2, which provisions should always be followed.

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

1051 1. When a noncommunicant member is received into full communion, that reception is effective at the time of his
 1052 public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, it is highly advisable that the minister
 1053 remind the people that he is already a member of the church, albeit a noncommunicant member, and has been
 1054 receiving the blessings of Christ as a member of the church, and that those blessings have resulted in this day
 1055 wherein, having given evidence of conscious saving faith in Christ, he is now about to confess that faith and become
 1056 a communicant member of the congregation. The minister may then address him in these or like words:

1057
 1058 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that you have
 1059 accepted God's covenant promise that was signified and sealed unto you in your infancy by holy baptism.
 1060 We ask you now to profess your faith publicly..

1061
 1062 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
 1063 equivalent questions:

- 1064
 1065 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
 1066 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
 1067 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
 1068 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
 1069 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
 1070 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
 1071 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
 1072 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
 1073 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
 1074 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
 1075 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
 1076 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

1077
 1078 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

1079
 1080 3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

1081
 1082 From the time [name] was baptized, the whole congregation has been obligated to love and receive
 1083 (him/her) as a member of the church. As (he/she) is received into full communion, the congregation is
 1084 reminded of these obligations. For in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this
 1085 (brother/sister) as his own and calls you to receive (him/her) in love and commitment. Therefore you ought
 1086 to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and
 1087 encouragement in our most precious faith and in the fellowship of believers.

1088
 1089 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
 1090 following or similar words:

1091
 1092 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
 1093 God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the holy supper.

1094
 1095 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
 1096 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

1097
 1098 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

1099
 1100 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
 1101 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

1102
 1103 This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

1104
 1105
 1106 **C. Reception by Letter of Transfer from Another Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

1107
 1108 When a person is received into membership on letter of transfer from another Orthodox Presbyterian congregation,
 1109 that reception is effective at the time of the action of the session to receive. Nevertheless, a session may deem it
 1110 appropriate to welcome that person publicly into the congregation and allow him to give public expression to his
 1111 faith. If this is done, it shall be made clear to the congregation that the person has already been received by action of
 1112 the session. Nevertheless, the minister may address him in appropriate words similar to those found below at D.4.
 1113

1114 **D. Reception by Letter of Transfer from Another Church of Like Faith and Practice**

1115
 1116 1. When a person is received into membership on letter of transfer from another church of like faith and practice
 1117 approved by the session, that reception is effective at the time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of
 1118 that person's public reception, the minister shall address him in these or like words:
 1119

1120 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that you have
 1121 accepted God's promise of salvation and publicly confessed your faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. We
 1122 praise him that he brought you into communicant membership in a church of like faith and practice with
 1123 this congregation. We rejoice that God, in his gracious providence, has now brought you here and given
 1124 you a desire to unite with us, and that your former church has committed you to our fellowship and
 1125 oversight. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following
 1126 questions.
 1127

1128 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
 1129 equivalent questions:
 1130

- 1131 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
 1132 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
 1133 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
 1134 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
 1135 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
 1136 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
 1137 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
 1138 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
 1139 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
 1140 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
 1141 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
 1142 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?
 1143

1144 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.
 1145

1146 3. The minister may exhort the congregation in these or like words:
 1147

1148 As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive
 1149 (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and
 1150 calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in
 1151 (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in
 1152 the fellowship of believers.
 1153

1154 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
 1155 following or like words:
 1156

1157 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
 1158 this congregation of God's people.
 1159 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
 1160 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.
 1161

1162 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

1163
 1164 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
 1165 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.
 1166

1167 This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.
 1168

1169 **E. Reception by Reaffirmation of Faith**

1170
 1171
 1172 1. When a person is received into membership by reaffirmation of faith, that reception is effective at the time of
 1173 his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, the minister shall address him in
 1174 these or like words:
 1175

1176 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that you have
 1177 accepted God's promise of salvation and publicly confessed your faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. We
 1178 rejoice that God, in his gracious providence, has brought you into this congregation and given you a desire
 1179 to reaffirm the faith that you have previously professed, and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before
 1180 us to the faith that you profess by giving assent to the following questions.
 1181

1182 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
 1183 equivalent questions:
 1184

- 1185 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
 1186 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
 1187 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
 1188 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
 1189 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
 1190 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
 1191 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
 1192 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
 1193 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
 1194 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
 1195 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
 1196 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?
 1197

1198 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.
 1199

1200 3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:
 1201

1202 As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive
 1203 (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and
 1204 calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in
 1205 (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in
 1206 the fellowship of believers.
 1207

1208 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
 1209 following or like words:
 1210

1211 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
 1212 this congregation of God's people.
 1213 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
 1214 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.
 1215

1216 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.
 1217

1218 May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little
 1219 while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

1220
 1221 This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

1222
 1223 **F. Reception of New Members by Public Profession of Faith**

1224
 1225 1. When an unbaptized person is received into membership by profession of faith, that reception is effective at the
 1226 time of his public profession of faith and baptism. He shall be received in accord with Chapter III.B.2 of this
 1227 Directory. When a previously baptized person who is not a member of the congregation and has not previously
 1228 made a confession of his faith is received into membership by profession of faith, that reception is effective at the
 1229 time of his public profession of faith. On the occasion of that person's public reception, the minister shall address
 1230 him in these or like words:

1231
 1232 Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace that was given you in that our Savior has
 1233 sought and found you and through faith you have become a partaker of the covenant of grace. We rejoice
 1234 that in his grace, he has brought you to this congregation and given you the desire to profess your faith
 1235 before us and to unite with us. We ask that you testify before us to the faith that you profess by giving
 1236 assent to the following questions.

1237
 1238 2. The minister shall then require the person to profess publicly his Christian faith by giving assent to these or
 1239 equivalent questions:

- 1240
 1241 (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its
 1242 doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
 1243 (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the
 1244 Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory,
 1245 and that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh?
 1246 (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you
 1247 repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
 1248 (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise that, in reliance on the
 1249 grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your
 1250 sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
 1251 (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its
 1252 government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

1253
 1254 If the session deems it appropriate it may also ask him to bear brief testimony to his faith in his own words.

1255
 1256 3. It is appropriate that the minister exhort the congregation in these or like words:

1257
 1258 As [name] is received into full communion in the church, the whole congregation is obligated to receive
 1259 (him/her), for in Christ we are members of one another. Christ claims this (brother/sister) as his own and
 1260 calls you to serve (him/her) in love. Therefore you ought to commit yourself before God to assist [name] in
 1261 (his/her) Christian nurture by godly example, prayer, and encouragement in our most precious faith and in
 1262 the fellowship of believers.

1263
 1264 4. When anyone has publicly professed his faith in this way, it is fitting that the minister address him in the
 1265 following or like words:

1266
 1267 Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with
 1268 God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the holy supper.

1269
 1270 I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of
 1271 God by the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

1272
 1273 Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven.

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

This part of the service shall be concluded with prayer.

CHAPTER V

SPECIAL OCCASIONS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

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

A. Prayer and Fasting

1. When great and notable calamities come upon or threaten the church, community, or nation, when judgment is deserved because of sin, when the people seek some special blessing from the Lord, or when a pastor is to be ordained or installed (FG XXIII.7), it is fitting that the people of God engage in times of solemn prayer and fasting.
2. Prayer and fasting may be observed by private individuals and families at their discretion or by the Church at the discretion of the appropriate judicatory. If the civil authority calls for a time of prayer and fasting that the judicatories of the Church deem to be in harmony with the Scriptures, they should consider issuing such a call to their members.
3. Public notice is to be given before the time of prayer and fasting comes, to enable persons to order their temporal affairs so that they can participate.
4. It is especially appropriate on days of prayer and fasting called by the Church that the people of God gather for a time of prayer, the singing of psalms and hymns, and the reading and preaching of the Word of God. Let them lament their distress or unworthiness before the Lord, confess their sins, humbly implore the Lord for deliverance from the judgment present or imminent or for the blessing sought, and commit themselves anew to the faithful service of the Lord their God. It is fitting on such days that God's people abstain from food and from such activities as may distract from their solemn engagement in prayer.

B. Thanksgiving

1. When God's blessings on the church, community, or nation are particularly evident, it is fitting that the people of God engage in special times of thanksgiving.
2. Special times of thanksgiving may be observed by private individuals and families at their discretion or by the Church as called by the appropriate judicatory. If the civil authority calls for a time of thanksgiving that the judicatories of the Church deem to be in harmony with the Scriptures, they should consider issuing such a call to their members.
3. Public notice is to be given before the day of thanksgiving comes, to enable persons to order their temporal affairs so that they can participate.
4. It is especially appropriate on special days of thanksgiving called by the Church that the people of God gather for prayer, testimony to God's blessings, joyful singing of psalms and hymns, and the reading and preaching of the Word of God. Let them give thanks to God for his goodness to his people and especially for the greatness of his

1329 mercies to them in Christ. And let them commit themselves anew to the faithful service of the Lord their God in
1330 gratitude for his blessings. It is fitting on such days that God's people spend the day in expressions of Christian love
1331 and charity toward one another, rejoicing more and more in the Lord, as becomes those who make the joy of the
1332 Lord their strength. Also, they may feast together before the Lord with joy and thanksgiving.