



## **Worship from the United Reformed Church**

ISBN 978-0-85346-356-6

© The United Reformed Church 2026

Published by The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

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Designed and produced by the URC Communications Team.

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# Foreword

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## Worship: from the United Reformed Church

These resources for worship are offered to the church as a contribution to the conduct of public worship at the beginning of the 21st century. In 1980, eight years after the foundation of the United Reformed Church, *A Book of Services* was issued by the Doctrine and Worship Committee under the wise and able guidance of John Huxtable. In his short preface he wrote, *‘The orders found here are not prescribed. It is not expected that they will be used in our churches to the exclusion of others. Yet we believe most of these services reflect the ethos of our Church and of its inherited traditions.’* These sentiments applied also to the 1989 *Service Book* and still hold true for this publication.

What has changed at the beginning of the 21st century is the context in which public

worship is offered. We now find ourselves in a missionary setting where the church can no longer take for granted that most people understand the religious language and imagery of past generations. Language is changing and the language of worship has to take account of this. Our words may be beautiful and doctrinally sound, but if they are not *‘something understood’*, they do not aid our worship. There is, of course, a measure of ambiguity and mystery lying at the heart of the most telling language of worship. However, we should aim at clarity as well as elegant expression. We should be expressing old truths in new ways.

We also need the language to express new truths in thoroughly Christian ways. Contemporary liturgists search for such

language – and this quest can bring a creative tension with the traditional language of the church.

At the time of original publication, the then Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee had been aware of the need for continuity and change within the worship of the church. We have provided worship resources deeply rooted in our Reformed heritage, along with resources which develop our liturgical tradition in the spirit of the dictum *‘the Reformed church is ever in need of reformation’*. We are aware of the breadth of liturgical expression within the church and we have sought to provide a range of styles of services. The rubrics have deliberately been kept to a minimum, thus encouraging worship leaders to develop styles appropriate to their situation. There are exceptions, such as ‘prayers for healing’ and ‘laying-on of hands’, where it was felt greater guidance would be welcomed. The Baptism service contains wording required by the General Assembly. It is our hope that all the services act as

guides to the development of the worship life of the church, and all to the glory of God.

This publication includes an element in the form of an order for daily worship. The first Order of Holy Communion and the Baptism service had originally been issued in draft form and the comments received from the church have been taken into account in the final texts.

The committee owes a debt of gratitude to all contributors to this publication, which uses the work of many talented liturgists.

John A Young,  
*Convener, Doctrine,  
Prayer and Worship  
Committee, 2003*

## Introduction

The Worship, Faith, and Order Committee commissioned reworked services for Initiation, Ordination and Commissioning after hearing requests for material to be provided with more expansive language. The Committee decided to retain

the wording in Schedules A, B, C, and F of the Basis of Union. The language of the Holy Trinity within them is the language the Church has used for centuries to describe ‘the God whom Jesus called Father’. It emphasises the relationships within the Trinity that are key to our understanding of the Triune God. Such language and understanding is shared with the whole Church, across the world and through the ages.

However, the Committee believed that it is good and helpful to add a wide range of biblically grounded images for God in language that is ecumenically informed, expansive, elegant, and worthy of worship, to go alongside the traditional formulations. This means that the language of the Schedules is placed in a broader context, and that those leading will have more expansive language to draw on in the rest of the service. It is important to remember that apart from the Schedules themselves, the prayers, readings, and feel of the service are for those leading to shape and voice, according to

their choice. But it may be helpful to have some forms and models that might be widely used.

The rubrics of the services are designed to make it more explicit where the Schedules provide more freedom than might be assumed. For example, in the services of baptism and confirmation there is an option to compose your own affirmations within a certain framework (a Trinitarian formulation of faith, repentance of sin etc...). Efforts have been made to make this more obvious as an option, and an example is provided.

New material that uses expansive language has been suggested in a way that, it is hoped, does not draw attention to itself, but simply prays or speaks using metaphors, images or ideas that are broadly based. There are new translations and versions of the Aaronic blessing that are faithful to the Hebrew. There are alternative blessings that use new Trinitarian language and seek to express in new ways something of the fullness of the Trinity. ‘Lord’ has not been used when it might be taken to refer to

or to privilege a male hierarchy, but where it reflects a Christlike subversion of Lordship (it is Jesus, the servant, who is our Lord – not Caesar...). The 1997 inclusive language Statement of Faith has been introduced into the body of the text so that it might be more readily used – and a responsive version of it (without changing a word since it has been approved by Assembly) has been provided. All references to the person or persons being baptised, received, ordained, inducted, or commissioned are in plural and in italics – they, those, them – to leave options open and to resist a binary description.

The existing texts did not reflect some of the changes that there have been made in the URC over the past 20 years; the transfer of some functions from District Councils to Synods, the strength of the distinction between Assembly Accredited and Locally Recognised Worship Leaders, and the reality that congregations may not always have a minister, or a minister present, and these have been amended. The further promise

that Assembly agreed should be made by Elders at ordination and induction has been added. The decision of General Assembly 2005 that the ordination of Elders should recognise that Elders serve the whole Church and not just the local church has been reflected in the revised service.

Some Scripture sentences are offered in new translations and versions still faithful to the original languages from the NRSV. Prayers have been created for when the Lord's Supper is celebrated at the ordination and induction of Elders and commissioning of Lay Preachers or Worship Leaders, since it would normally be the case to share Communion at these services. In many services it is suggested that a 'welcome' might be given, and the biblical origin of the 'right hand of fellowship' is explained.

Prayers using traditional Trinitarian language have not been excluded, but the URC's resolution to expand language has been honoured. No language, when used of God, can be either literal or adequate,

for all is metaphor and glimpse. But God gives us the sources of tradition, our mother tongue of the Scriptures, and the wells of our imagination with which to pray, praise and bless.

These prayers and liturgies are offered so that they can be adopted or adapted – or discarded – as worship leaders feel led, to wrap around the Schedules approved in the Basis of Union.

Susan Durber  
Andy Braunston  
*February 2024*

Other parts of our worship, such as occasional acts of worship or parts of services infrequently used by churches, are available to download for free from the URC website:  
**[www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)**

Printed editions of the URC Worship Book are available to buy from the URC shop:  
**[www.urbshop.co.uk](http://www.urbshop.co.uk)**

The United Reformed Church expresses its grateful thanks to all of the contributors who made this publication possible.

Andy Jackson  
*Head of Communications*

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# Introduction

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The four services presented here reflect the belief of the Reformers that the service of Word and Sacrament is the normative service of the church – as we read in Acts 2:42, ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.’

John Calvin maintained that any time the church came together to meet it should involve the reading of scripture, preaching and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This should be done at least every Sunday.

For reasons of history, the predecessor denominations of the United Reformed Church (except for the Churches of Christ) have never been, or felt, able to do this. However, they never lost sight of the centrality of the service of Word and Sacrament, and even when the Lord’s Supper has not been celebrated we still look to that service to provide us with an order for our worship of God.

The first two services have been written especially for this book, and both contain a wealth of new material. The first order of Holy Communion provides a full order of worship for a service of Word and Sacrament with the use of many of the liturgical items found in *Rejoice and Sing*. The language draws on a very rich range of biblical imagery, especially from the Old Testament. Within the service the narrative of the institution (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) may be used as a warrant before the thanksgiving prayer or included within it. While the former position is traditionally Reformed, both practices are ecumenically acceptable.

A greater degree of participation by the congregation is allowed for, both in the responses and in physical movement. The service may either be used as it stands or it may be shortened by the omission of some of the suggested items.

The second order of Holy Communion is one that is especially suitable when there is a broader range of ages present in the congregation and a less formal service is desired. The language is simpler and more direct, and the congregational responses can be made by the repetition of phrases.

The third order of Holy Communion is taken from the 1989 *Service Book* and continues the liturgical heritage of the Churches of Christ in our midst. The most noticeable variation from the other services is the way in which the thanksgiving may be divided so that thanks is given over the bread and it is shared, and then a thanksgiving over the wine before it is shared. This reflects the early tradition according to which, at the Last Supper, Jesus said separate prayers over the bread and the wine.

The fourth order of Holy Communion is perhaps the most historic of the four services for the United Reformed Church. Usually thought of as the order from *New Church Praise*, it had appeared shortly before that,

being produced at the request of the first United Reformed Church General Assembly in 1973. Primarily the work of James Todd, it drew on material from both the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, and ecumenically from the Joint Liturgical Group of Great Britain. Much of the material used in it can be found at the front of *Rejoice and Sing*, and the first section of thanksgiving prayer can be varied to reflect the different seasons and festivals of the church year.

# First order of Holy Communion

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8. Lord, have mercy ( <i>Kyrie eleison</i> ) .....	C7
9. Glory to God ( <i>Gloria in excelsis</i> ) .....	C7
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<b>The Ministry of the Word .....</b>	<b>C9</b>
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12. Psalm, canticle, hymn or sung response .....	C9
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24.	Lamb of God ( <i>Agnus Dei</i> ) .....	C16
25.	The Sharing of the bread and the wine.....	C17
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30.	Prayer for the Church .....	C20
31.	Prayer for justice in the world .....	C20
32.	Prayer for the peace of the world.....	C21
33.	Prayer for the integrity of creation.....	C21
34.	Prayer for human society and those in need .....	C21
35.	Commemoration of those who have died .....	C22

Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)

# The preparation

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The congregation stands as the Bible is brought into the church and placed open upon the lectern, pulpit or communion table. The Minister follows and greets the people.

## Greeting

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*All* **Grace to you and peace.** Romans 1:7

or

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

*All* **And also with you.** 2 Corinthians 13:13

A Scripture sentence, seasonal or general, may replace the greeting or be used in addition.

## Sentence

This is the day that the Lord has made;

*All* **let us rejoice and be glad in it.** Psalm 118:24

This is none other than the house of God,

*All* **and this is the gate of heaven.** Genesis 28:17

or

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

*All* **who made heaven and earth.** Psalm 124:8

## Hymn or Psalm

An appropriate hymn or psalm can be used.

## Prayer of Approach

God our source and guide and goal:  
you have made us in your image  
and set us in a world full of beauty;  
you dwell in light unapproachable,  
yet you have come to be among us, full of grace and truth;  
you are the power from on high,  
coming in wind and flame to work your wonders in our midst.  
Gracious God, awaken us from sleep  
that we may worship you in spirit and in truth:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Great Commandments

Alternatively, 'A New Commandment' (*Rejoice and Sing 745*)  
or the Ten Commandments may be used.

Hear, O Israel:

*All* **The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**

Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart,  
with all your soul,  
with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.

*All* **This is the first and great commandment.**

The second is like it:

Love your neighbour as yourself

*All* **There is no commandment greater than these.**

# Prayer of Confession

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,  
and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just,  
will forgive us our sins.

1 John 1:8-9a

Jesus says:

I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.

Mark 2:17

Let us confess our sins together  
and seek God's forgiveness.

*All*

**Almighty God, we confess before you  
our own sin, the sin of the Church  
and the sin of the world, in which we share.  
We have not loved you with our whole being;  
we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.  
In your mercy,  
forgive us when we turn from you;  
release us from the burden of our past,  
and remake us in your image and likeness  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Silence

## Assurance of Pardon

The Lord says: See, I am making all things new.

Revelation 21:5

*All* **If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.**

2 Corinthians 5:17

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself

2 Corinthians 5:19

Through him your sins are forgiven.

*All* **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

The Lord also says:

If any want to become my followers,

let them deny themselves

and take up their cross and follow me.

Mark 8:34

or

May the God of mercy

who forgives you all your sins through Jesus Christ

strengthen you in all goodness

by the power of the Holy Spirit

and keep you in eternal life.

*All* **Amen.**

## Lord, have mercy (*Kyrie eleison*)

The Kyries (*Rejoice and Sing 5*) may be said or sung.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

*All* **Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

or

Holy God, holy and mighty,  
holy and immortal,

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

## Glory to God (*Gloria in excelsis*)

Settings may be found at *Rejoice and Sing 6-8*.

*All* **Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.**

*All* **Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.**

*All* **Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.**

## **Prayer for grace or prayer for the day**

An appropriate prayer for grace or prayer for the day can be used.

# The Ministry of the Word

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Appropriate Scripture readings may be found in the Revised Common Lectionary. The readings may be interspersed with hymns or sung responses.

Before the reading of Scripture, the first reader may say:

Lord, break the bread of your word among us  
and nourish us with your truth.

At the end of the readings a response may be used:

Hear the word of the Lord.

*All* **Thanks be to God**

## Old Testament reading (Hebrew Scriptures)

## Psalm, canticle, hymn or sung response

(eg *Rejoice and Sing* canticles 736-758 or sung responses 394, 395, 397, 403)

## New Testament reading(s)

## Sermon

A short silence may be kept after the readings and/or the sermon.

## Affirmation of faith

An affirmation of faith or creed may be said or sung (eg *Rejoice and Sing* 759-761; 36-37, 103, 118, 219, 258, 262, 275, 283, 749, 752.)

## Prayers of Intercession

The intercessions may, if preferred, follow communion.

## The Lord's Prayer

Various forms of the Lord's Prayer can be found on page 100.

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# The Lord's Supper

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## Invitation

Let us celebrate this joyful feast.

People will come from east and west and north and south,  
and sit at table in the kingdom of God. Luke 13:29

Jesus said: I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,  
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.  
Anyone who comes to me I will never turn away.

John 6:35, 37

The invitation may be given in other appropriate words.

## Offertory

The bread and the wine may be brought to the table, with the gifts of the people. If the bread and wine are already on the table, they should now be uncovered. The following sentence may be used:

Brothers and sisters,  
by the mercies of God  
present your bodies as a living sacrifice,  
holy and acceptable to God.

Romans 12:1

If the Peace is used at this point, the following sentence may be used:

When you are offering your gift at the altar,  
if you remember that your brother or sister has  
something against you,

leave your gift there before the altar and go:  
first be reconciled to your brother or sister.

Matthew 5:23-24

The following prayer may be used:

Almighty and most merciful God,  
out of the fullness of your gifts  
we bring before you this bread and this wine,  
our gifts and our lives.

Blessed be your holy name forever,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness we have this bread to offer,  
which earth has given and human hands have made.  
May it become for us the bread of life.

*All* **Blessed be God for ever.**

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness we have this wine to offer,  
fruit of the vine and the work of human hands.  
May it become for us the cup of salvation.

*All* **Blessed be God for ever.**

*All* **Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness  
we have ourselves to offer,  
fruit of the womb, and formed by your love.  
May we become your servants in the world.  
Blessed be God for ever.**

## Narrative of the institution

The narrative may be omitted if it is used as part of the prayer of thanksgiving.

Hear the narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper as it is recorded by St Paul.

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me'. In the same way he took the cup also, after Supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts.

*All* **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*All* **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We offer you thanks, Creator, Saviour, Giver of Life.

From the beginning you have made yourself known: the heavens proclaim your glory and the earth sings your praise.

In wisdom you made all that is

and you bless us with earth's fruitfulness.

You are merciful and gracious, and abounding in love.

Yet from our first days we have disobeyed your will.

Long ago you called to yourself a people

to shine as light to guide all nations to your presence.

You led them to freedom;  
you revealed to them your Law  
and taught them through your prophets.  
Finally you sent your promised Son, Jesus Christ,  
who shared our human nature and understood our weakness.  
Born of Mary, he showed forth your love by word and sign.  
Therefore with all your people in heaven and on earth  
we sing the triumphant hymn of your glory:

*All* **Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

He sought the unloved and the lost  
and welcomed all who came to him;  
he taught us lessons of forgiveness  
he brought us healing for our sickness,  
and showed us how to live according to your will.  
For this he was rejected,  
for this he endured grief and sorrow,  
for this he gave himself up to death upon the Cross.  
But you broke the power of sin and death  
and raised him to the heights,  
that through the blood of his Cross  
and by the gift of the Holy Spirit  
everything in earth and heaven might be reconciled to you.

[The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed  
took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it  
and said:

‘This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this is remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying:

‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,  
you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.]

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All** **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

or

**All** **Dying, you destroyed our death.**

**Rising, you restored our life.**

**Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

Come, Creator God: renew the face of the earth;

come, eternal Saviour: remake us in your likeness;

come, Holy Spirit, transform these gifts:

that Christ may be known to us in the breaking of the bread

and that we may be strengthened to serve him in the world.

May we on earth be one with all Christ’s people,

and, when all things are complete,

be raised up to be with him,

[with ... *the saints; those who have died*]

and with all your faithful servants in the heavenly places,

the homeland which we seek by faith,

and where he reigns in glory,

with you, Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever.

**All** **Amen.**

## The Peace

A sign of Peace may be shared, according to local custom. The Peace may be shared earlier in the service, eg after the assurance of pardon or at the offertory or after communion.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

*All* **Peace be with you.**

## **The breaking of the bread and pouring of the wine**

The narrative of the institution may be used here if not used earlier.

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast. 1 Corinthians 5:7

The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.

The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:16

or the Easter anthems may be said or sung (*Rejoice and Sing 748*)

## Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)

Musical settings will be found at *Rejoice and Sing 14-16*

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.

*All* **Have mercy upon us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.

*All* **Have mercy upon us**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.

*All* **Grant us peace.**

or

Jesus, Lamb of God:

*All* **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, bearer of our sins:

*All* **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, redeemer of the world:

*All* **grant us peace.**

## The Sharing of the bread and the wine

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

*All* **Alleluia.**

or

Holy things for a holy people.

*All* **Only one is holy, the Lord Jesus Christ.  
We are made holy in him.**

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you.  
Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ,  
shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin.

Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

or

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

or

The bread of heaven in Christ Jesus.

The cup of salvation in Christ Jesus.

## Prayer after Communion

God of a love stronger than death,  
you have given us new birth into a living hope  
through the gift of your Son.

God with us,

like a mother you have fed us with yourself  
and strengthened us for journeying ahead.

God of truth and power,  
you take our weakness and our sin  
and refashion us by grace.

*All*

**Gracious God,**  
**may the love which bids us welcome at this table**  
**gather all your children into one,**  
**in your eternal presence,**  
**whole and free at last.**  
**Amen.**

## Hymn or Psalm

An appropriate hymn or psalm can be used.

## Dismissal

Go out into the world with the food of your pilgrimage  
in peace and gladness.

*All*

**Thanks be to God for his gift beyond words.**

or

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*All*

**In the name of Christ.**

**Amen.**

## Blessing

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Prayers of Intercession

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Responses may be used between the sections. Sung responses will be found at *Rejoice and Sing* 5, 393, 397, 398, 402). Times of silence may also be left. Where possible two or three different voices may be used. In the prayers for peace, justice and the integrity of creation, candles may be lit for human rights, the peace of the earth, and the harmony of creation.

Jesus taught his disciples always to pray and not lose heart.

God all just, all merciful,  
your compassion is over all that you have made:

## Prayer for the Church

We pray for your Church throughout the world:  
for its faithfulness in proclaiming the good news,  
for its mission to reach out with Christ's love  
to all who are in need,  
for its witness, to shine as light where darkness prevails,  
for its peace and unity,  
to be a sign of reconciliation in a divided world.

We pray especially for ...  
and for all Christ's people in this place,  
that they may be given strength to walk in his way,  
embrace his truth, and show forth his life.

## Prayer for justice in the world

We pray for justice for those who are denied it,  
who suffer for their beliefs,  
or who are persecuted for what they are,  
that their rights and dignity may be upheld;  
we pray for those who are exploited

or enslaved at work or in the home,  
that their cries may be heard;  
for the many who go poor while the few prosper,  
that the earth's resources may be fairly shared.

## **Prayer for the peace of the world**

We pray for the world in all its need:  
for its peace, remembering today ...  
for the victims of war, terror, famine and disease,  
that they may be freed from all afflictions;  
for those who are forced to flee their homes,  
that they may find safe lodging;  
for those who misuse power,  
that they may serve others, not themselves;  
for those who nurture hatred in their hearts,  
that they may come to know the meaning of the Cross.

## **Prayer for the integrity of creation**

We pray for the earth itself, polluted and despoiled,  
that the fragile balance of the natural order  
may be respected,  
its beauty and variety preserved,  
and greed and selfish gain be put aside,  
that harmony may be restored between ourselves and our  
environment.

## **Prayer for human society and those in need**

We pray for nations and societies across the world,  
and for our own,  
for national and local government,  
that those who rule may serve with wisdom and integrity;

for communities, that they may seek the common good;  
for those who work to support and enhance community life,  
that their endeavours may prosper;  
for those whose work influences the lives of many,  
that they may act responsibly and justly.  
We pray for families and children,  
that they may be secure and strong;  
for friends and neighbours, wherever they are;  
for the sick, the lonely, the neglected,  
the dying and the bereaved,  
that they may know the healing touch of Christ;  
for those who have lost hope,  
that light will shine in their darkness;  
for those in any kind of need, especially for ...

## **Commemoration of those who have died**

We remember with joy those whose journey now is ended  
and whose lives among us helped us on our way,  
especially ...

We commend to you those who have died  
unloved,  
unmourned,  
and those dear to others.

We pray that we may come with them  
to where there are no endings or beginnings,  
but one equal joy in your eternal presence.

These prayers we offer through Jesus Christ,  
who gave his life that all might be reconciled  
and your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

*All* **Amen.**

# Second order of Holy Communion

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Especially when all ages are present

1. The call .....	D2
2. Hymn or song .....	D2
3. Prayer of praise .....	D2
4. Prayer of Confession and words of forgiveness .....	D4
5. Prayer for grace .....	D4
6. Hymn or song .....	D5
7. Readings .....	D5
8. Presentation of the Good News.....	D6
9. Hymn or song .....	D6
10. The invitation .....	D6
11. The story of the Lord's Supper .....	D7
12. The prayer of Jesus .....	D7
13. Hymn or song .....	D7
14. Offering .....	D7
15. Offering prayer.....	D8
16. The Thanksgiving .....	D8
17. The breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup .....	D10
18. The Sharing .....	D11
19. The Peace .....	D11
20. Prayers .....	D11
21. Hymn or song .....	D13
22. Sending out and blessing .....	D13

Welcome, greetings and introductions.

Music may be rehearsed, news shared and any necessary explanations or instructions given.

The responses in this service are either well known or are based on repeating a line. The congregation need to know when a line is to be repeated. This can be indicated either by the worship leader or by having a designated 'cantor' who speaks only the lines to be repeated.

## **The call**

The time is fulfilled,  
and the kingdom of God has come near;  
repent, and believe in the good news!

Mark 1:15

## **Hymn or song**

## **Prayer of praise**

Let us pray.  
Loving God,  
you create the world  
and all the people.  
You make bread and wine  
and all good things.  
You are holy and we praise you.

Jesus Christ,  
child of God  
and friend of us all,  
you are with us today  
as we break the bread  
and share the wine.  
You are Lord and we love you.

Holy Spirit,  
breath of God,  
moving in all creation,  
you bring us close to God  
and make us holy and strong.  
You are here and we adore you.

A short Trinitarian verse of praise may be sung, preferably from memory (eg *Rejoice and Sing* 21-25).

or

Loving God,  
in the company of all your people  
we come to you,  
and your presence is joy to us.  
We come here  
on this first day of the week  
to meet with you and with each other  
and to listen for your word for each one.  
We are ready to break bread and to drink wine,  
to remember again the stories of our faith,  
and to be changed by being here with you.  
As we worship  
in the company of angels,  
surrounded by the saints,  
and embraced by your love,  
let us give ourselves openly and freely,  
as you give yourself to us,  
in tenderness and love.  
Loving God, Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit,  
we worship you,  
the one holy and eternal God.

Silence

## **Prayer of Confession and words of forgiveness**

God of justice and forgiveness,  
we confess that we live in a world  
in which some are hungry even for bread,  
many people are sad or hurt,  
and there is much that is unfair and unjust.

We confess that in our own lives  
we do not always do what is right  
or turn away from what is  
wrong.

We ask your forgiveness,  
we claim your love and mercy,  
and we ask for courage to make a new beginning.  
In the name of Jesus Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

Jesus said, 'Your sins are forgiven.'  
Mark 2:9

He also said, 'Whoever does the will of God  
is my brother and sister and mother.'  
Mark 3:35

## **Prayer for grace**

Eternal God,  
we believe the good news  
of your mercy and love,  
and rejoice that we are forgiven and free.  
Receive us as your children,  
as brothers and sisters of Jesus,  
part of your new community of love,

and give us strength to do your will,  
today and always.

*All* **Amen.**

## Hymn or song

### Readings

A reading from the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures)

Psalm

The psalm is 'lined out', the leader saying one line of text and the people repeating it. Psalm 117 is given as an example.

Praise the Lord, all you nations!  
Psalm 117

*All* **Praise the Lord, all you nations!**

Extol him, all you peoples!

*All* **Extol him, all you peoples!**

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

*All* **For great is his steadfast love toward us,**

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.

*All* **and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.**

Praise the Lord!

*All* **Praise the Lord!**

A reading from a Gospel (and/or other New Testament book)

Let anyone with ears to hear listen!

Mark 4:9

*All* **Let anyone with ears to hear listen!**

# Presentation of the Good News

(in ways appropriate for the day)

## Hymn or song

## The invitation

Jesus was often a guest.  
He shared many meals with his friends,  
and they long remembered his words at the table.  
Though some disapproved of the company he kept,  
Jesus ate and drank with all kinds of people  
and showed everyone the love of God.  
Wherever people met together  
Jesus was glad to be welcomed and to be fed.  
Today, we are the guests of Jesus.  
He welcomes us,  
whoever we are and whatever we bring,  
and he will feed us at his table.  
Old or young, rich or poor, joyful or in sorrow,  
Jesus invites us  
to share bread and wine with him,  
to remember the story of his life and death,  
and to celebrate his presence with us today.  
On the night before he died,  
Jesus shared a meal with 12 of his disciples  
in an upstairs room in Jerusalem.  
The Gospel writer tells us what happened that night.

## **The story of the Lord's Supper**

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I tell you, I will never again drink the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

Mark 14:22-25

We are the friends and disciples of Jesus today.  
He invites us to break bread together,  
to remember him  
and to pray that God's Kingdom will come.

## **The prayer of Jesus**

Said together, each person using the version or language most familiar to them. The prayer may be said after the prayers of intercession instead.

## **Hymn or song**

## **Offering**

During or after the hymn or song the bread and wine and the offerings of the people may be brought to the table.

## Offering prayer

We bring this bread and this wine  
to the table of Jesus.  
With them we bring ourselves,  
all that we are and all that we own.  
May the ordinary become holy,  
and heaven be opened to the people of earth.

May God be blessed forever!

*All* **May God be blessed forever!**

## The Thanksgiving

God is with us!

*All* **God is with us!**

We give thanks and praise to God!

*All* **We give thanks and praise to God!**

Loving God,  
the world you made is beautiful  
and full of wonder.  
You made us, with all your creatures,  
and you love all that you have made.  
You gave us the words of your prophets,  
the stories of your people through the generations,  
and the gathered wisdom of many years.  
You gave us Jesus, your Son,  
to be born and to grow up  
in difficult times when there was little peace.  
He embraced people with your love  
and told stories to change us all.  
He healed those in pain  
and brought to life those who had lost hope.

He made friends with anyone who would listen  
and loved even his enemies.  
For these things, he suffered.  
For these things, he died.  
And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.  
You give us your Holy Spirit,  
to teach and to strengthen us,  
to remind us of Jesus Christ,  
and to make us one in him.

For all these gifts we thank you,  
and we join with all your people  
on earth and in heaven,  
in joyful praise:

Hosanna!

*All* **Hosanna!**

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

*All* **Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!**

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

*All* **Hosanna in the highest heaven!**

Mark 11:9b,10b

We praise you that we are here today,  
around the table of Jesus.

We have heard the good news of your love;  
the cross is the sign of your arms  
stretched out in love for us  
and the empty tomb declares your love  
stronger than death.

Christ has died!

*All* **Christ has died!**

Christ is risen!

*All* **Christ is risen!**

Christ will come again!

*All* **Christ will come again!**

Send your Holy Spirit  
upon this bread and wine,  
and upon your people,  
that Christ may be with us,  
and we may be made ready to live for you  
and to do what you ask of us,  
today, and every day to come.

We make this prayer  
through Jesus Christ,  
in the power of the Holy Spirit,  
in the love of the Creator,  
one God,  
to whom be glory and praise forever,

*All* **Amen.**

## **The breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup**

Eat this bread. It is the bread of life.

Drink this wine. It is the cup of blessing.

## The Sharing

The Elders (or those chosen) may take the bread and wine to the congregation, or the people may pass the bread and cup from hand to hand as they are gathered around the table. There may be singing during the sharing of the bread and wine.

Thanks be to God for this gift beyond words.

*All* **Thanks be to God for this gift beyond words.**

## The Peace

Jesus said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' Then he took a little child and he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

Mark 9:35a-37

Let us greet one another with a sign of peace.

## Prayers

Let us pray.

Loving God,  
you have fed us generously at this table,  
as we have remembered Jesus  
and rejoiced that he is with us today.  
We are ready now to follow him,  
and to be your people in the world.  
May your Holy Spirit show us the way,  
make us holy and fill us with love.

Lord, in your mercy,  
*All* **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church,  
for the great Church throughout the world,  
and for our own church community  
gathered today for worship and prayer.  
May we remember Jesus every day,  
grow in understanding of him,  
and learn to love you and our neighbours.

Fill us with your Spirit,  
and make us people of peace,  
of faithful prayer and loving action.  
Lord, in your mercy,

*All* **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the whole world;  
for the people, the animals,  
the earth, the sea and the air.  
May all that you have made  
be sustained in peace and harmony,  
and may all your creatures  
share in the goodness of creation.  
Bring healing to all who are suffering,  
and may all your people share in hope  
especially ...

Lord, in your mercy,  
*All* **hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves,  
for our families and our friends,

for all those we love  
and for those we find it hard to love.  
May young and old respect one another,  
and the generations honour one another.  
May nothing divide us or come between us,  
but let your love bind us in affection.  
Bless us with your peace,  
that together we may praise you forever.

*All* Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

*All* Glory to God  
**Glory to God**

*All* Glory in the highest  
**Glory in the highest**

*All* Today and always  
**Today and always**  
**Amen.**

## Hymn or song

### Sending out and blessing

Jesus said,  
‘Go home to your friends,  
and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,  
and what mercy he has shown you.’

Mark 5:19

The blessing of God be upon you,  
the One who loves you,  
the Christ who calls you,  
the Spirit who makes you holy,  
today and always.

*All*

**Amen.**

Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

# Third order of Holy Communion

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1. Scripture sentences .....	E2
2. Prayer, Confession, and Assurance of Pardon .....	E2
3. Theme introduction and Scripture readings .....	E3
4. Sermon .....	E3
5. Open or responsive prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession .....	E3
6. The Lord's Prayer .....	E3
7. The Peace .....	E4
8. Offertory .....	E4
9. The Approach to Communion .....	E5
10. Narrative of the institution .....	E6
11. Thanksgiving and Sharing .....	E6
12. Prayer after Communion .....	E9
13. Blessing .....	E10

Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

## Scripture sentences

*All* Give thanks to the God of heaven,  
**for God's steadfast love endures for ever.** Psalm 136:26

The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the main corner-stone.  
*All* **This is the work of the Lord;  
it is wonderful in our eyes.** Psalm 118:22-3

## Prayer, Confession, and Assurance of Pardon

Eternal God, creator of all things, giver of life,  
we praise and worship you.  
We thank you that you have  
always loved the world you have made;  
and that, however far we stray from you,  
your love is always there to welcome us home.

We do not deserve your love,  
but we dare to believe the good news of your mercy  
declared by our Lord Jesus Christ,  
whose offering of his life for us and for all people  
we set forth in this bread and wine.

Be present at this your table  
as with penitent and forgiving hearts  
we break bread and drink wine in your name.  
Fill us with your Holy Spirit,  
that our worship may truly express our love  
for you and for one another.  
Make us glad and give us joy and peace.

Let us confess our sins:

*All* **God our Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against one another,  
in thought, word and deed;  
we have not loved you with all our heart;  
we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.  
But you have kept faith with us.  
Have mercy on us,  
forgive us our sins,  
and restore us to newness of life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.  
To all who turn to him he says:  
'Your sins are forgiven.' He also says: 'Follow me.'

## **Theme introduction and Scripture readings**

Old Testament; Epistle; Gospel.

## **Sermon**

## **Open or responsive prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

## The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*All* **And also with you.**

The Peace may be shared

## Offertory

*All* **Lord God, we bring you  
the ordinary things of life –  
food and drink and money –  
and with them we bring ourselves.  
Take us, and our gifts of money,  
to do your work in the world.  
Take this food and drink from our tables  
and feed us from your table with your love.  
Accept the praise we offer;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

or

*All* **Eternal God,  
we come with these gifts  
to offer the praise of our lives;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

## The Approach to Communion

As we gather at this table, we remember  
that Jesus was born of Mary;  
he lived our common life on earth;  
he suffered and died for us;  
on the third day God raised him from the dead;  
and he is always present with us through the Holy Spirit.  
In his presence,  
and in the company of all the people of God,  
past, present, and to come,  
we celebrate the Supper of the Lord.

‘Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;  
if you hear my voice and open the door,  
I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.’

Revelation 3:20

or

How shall I repay the Lord for all his benefits to me?  
I will take the cup of salvation,  
and call upon the name of the Lord.  
I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
and call upon the name of the Lord.      Psalm 116:11-12; 16

or

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail  
for they shall be satisfied.      Matthew 5:6

## Narrative of the institution

Hear again the words of institution of this feast as they are given by the Apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-6

## Thanksgiving and Sharing

Lift up your hearts.

*All* **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*All* **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give thanks to you, O God,  
that from the earth you cause the grain to come  
for the making of bread.

We praise you for Christ, the bread of life,  
whose body was given for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and this loaf,  
that the bread which we break may be to us  
the communion of the body of Christ,  
and that we may be made one in him.

As of old you fed your people in the wilderness,

so feed us now that we may live to your praise;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*The Minister breaks the bread saying:*

When Jesus had given thanks,  
he broke the bread and said:  
‘Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.’

*The distribution takes place*

We give thanks to you, O God,  
that you cause the vine to yield fruit.  
We bless you for Christ, the true vine,  
whose blood was poured out for us.  
By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and this wine,  
that the cup which we bless may be to us  
the communion of the blood of Christ,  
and that through abiding in him  
we may bear fruit that shall last.  
As we share the sufferings of Christ, so give us grace  
that we may know the power of his resurrection;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*The Minister pours the wine and distributes it saying:*

When Jesus had given thanks,  
he gave the cup to his disciples and said:  
‘Drink this, all of you;  
for this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many,  
for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it  
in remembrance of me.'

or

Lift up your hearts.

*All* **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*All* **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give thanks to you, O God,  
that from the earth you cause the grain to come  
for the making of bread  
and that you cause the vine to yield fruit.  
We praise you for Christ,  
the bread of life and true vine,  
whose body was given for us,  
and whose blood was poured out for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us  
and these your gifts of bread and wine,  
that the bread which we break  
may be the communion of the body of Christ,  
and the cup which we bless  
may be the communion of the blood of Christ.  
As we share the sufferings of Christ,  
so give us grace to know the power of his resurrection,  
that we may be made one and evermore abide in him,  
to your praise and glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

The Minister breaks the bread saying:

When Jesus had given thanks he broke the bread and said:  
'Take, eat: this is my body which is for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.'

### The distribution takes place

### The Minister pours the wine and distributes it saying:

When Jesus had given thanks,  
he gave the cup to his disciples and said:  
'Drink this, all of you;  
for this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many,  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

## Prayer after Communion

Strengthen for service, Lord,  
the hands that have taken holy things.  
May the ears that have heard your word  
be deaf to clamour and dispute.  
May the eyes that have seen your great love  
shine with the light of hope.  
May the tongues that have sung your praise  
also speak the truth.  
May the feet that have walked in your house  
ever walk in the light.  
May the bodies that have tasted your living body  
be restored to newness of life.  
Thanks be to God for his gift beyond words.

*All* **Amen.**

or

*All*    **Now, Lord let your servant go in peace:  
your word has been fulfilled.  
My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared  
in the sight of every people:  
a light to reveal you to the nations,  
and the glory of your people Israel.**  
Luke 2:29-32

*All*    **Glory to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be for ever.  
Amen.**

## **Blessing**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: **[www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)**

# Fourth order of Holy Communion

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1. Scripture sentences .....	F3
2. Prayer of Approach .....	F3
3. Hymn or Psalm .....	F4
4. Confession of sin .....	F4
5. Assurance of Pardon .....	F5
6. The <i>Kyries</i> .....	F5
7. <i>Gloria in excelsis</i> .....	F6
8. Prayer for grace .....	F6
9. Old Testament and/or New Testament reading .....	F7
10. Psalm, canticle, hymn or anthem .....	F7
11. New Testament reading(s).....	F7
12. Hymn .....	F7
13. Sermon .....	F7
14. Hymn .....	F7
15. Prayers for the Church and the world .....	F7
16. The invitation and the gracious words .....	F10
17. The Peace .....	F10
18. Offertory.....	F11
19. Hymn .....	F11
20. The narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper.	F11
21. The taking of the bread and wine .....	F12
22. The Thanksgiving .....	F12
23. The Lord's Prayer .....	F14
24. The breaking of the bread .....	F14
25. The Sharing of the bread and wine .....	F15
26. The acclamation .....	F15

27. Prayer after Communion .....	F16
28. Hymn or doxology.....	F16
29. Dismissal and blessing .....	F16
<b>Seasonal Thanksgiving.....</b>	<b>F17</b>
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**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

The Bible may be brought into the church; the Minister may call the people to worship.

Let us worship God.

## Scripture sentences

*All* This is the day which the Lord has made;  
**let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

*All* It is good to give thanks to the Lord;  
**for God's love endures for ever.**

Other sentences may be used or seasonal sentences added.

## Prayer of Approach

Let us pray.

Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy Name;  
through Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Almighty God,  
infinite and eternal  
in wisdom, power and love:  
we praise you for all that you are,  
and for all that you do for the world.

You have shown us your truth and your love  
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Help us by your Spirit  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Hymn or Psalm

An appropriate hymn or psalm can be used.

## Confession of sin

Let us confess our sins to God and ask for forgiveness.

*All* **Lord God most merciful,  
we confess that we have sinned,  
through our own fault,  
and in common with others,  
in thought, word and deed,  
and through what we have left undone.**

**We ask to be forgiven.**

**By the power of your Spirit  
turn us from evil to good,  
help us to forgive others,  
and keep us in your ways  
of righteousness and love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

## Assurance of Pardon

In repentance and in faith  
receive the promise of grace  
and the assurance of pardon.

Here are words you may trust,  
words that merit full acceptance:

‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’

1 Timothy 1:15

Your sins are forgiven for his sake.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

*or*

God so loved the world  
that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him  
may not perish  
but may have eternal life.

John 3:16

To all who repent and believe,  
we declare, in the name of the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Spirit:  
God grants you the forgiveness of your sins.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

## The Kyries

Lord, have mercy on us.

*All* **Christ, have mercy on us.**

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

## ***Gloria in excelsis***

*All* **Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.**

## **Prayer for grace**

The collect of the day or prayer for grace may be said here or after the sermon.

The theme of the service may be introduced, particularly to any children present, and a hymn sung before they leave; or this may be done following one of the readings.

## Old Testament reading

and/or a New Testament reading

## Psalm, canticle, hymn or anthem

## New Testament reading

or readings: Epistle and Gospel

## Hymn

## Sermon

The sermon may be followed by silence and/or prayer.

## Hymn

## Prayers for the Church and the world

After each paragraph a response may be said, such as

Lord, in your mercy,

*All* **Hear our prayer.**

The subjects after the words 'We pray for' are suggestions. Intervals of silence may be kept. The prayer may be made continuous by omitting the words 'We pray for' and the words in italics.

Let us pray.

Almighty God,  
whose Spirit helps us in our weakness  
and guides us in our prayers;  
we pray for the Church and for the world  
in the name of Jesus Christ.

We pray for

*the Church throughout the world  
our Ministers, Elders and members  
local unity and witness*

Renew the faith and life of the Church;  
strengthen its witness;  
and make it one in Christ.

Grant that we  
and all who confess that he is Lord  
may be faithful in service  
and filled with his spirit,  
and that the world may be turned to Christ.

We pray for

*the nations of the world  
our own country  
all who work for reconciliation*

Guide the nations in the ways  
of justice, liberty and peace;  
and help them to seek the unity  
and welfare of all peoples.

Give to our King and to all in authority  
wisdom to know and strength to do what is right.

We pray for

*all who serve the community*

Grant that men and women  
in their various callings  
may have grace to do their work well;  
and may the resources of the earth be wisely used,  
truth honoured and preserved,  
and the quality of our life enriched.

We pray for

*the sick and the suffering  
victims of injustice  
the lonely and the bereaved*

Comfort those in sorrow;  
heal the sick in body or in mind;  
and deliver the oppressed.  
Give us active sympathy for all who suffer;  
and help us so to bear the burdens of others  
that we may fulfil the law of Christ.

We pray for

*our families  
friends and neighbours  
all who need our prayers*

Keep us and the members of our families  
united in loyalty and in love,  
and always in your care;  
and may our friends and neighbours,  
and all for whom we pray,  
receive the help they need, and live in peace.

We remember those who have died

Eternal God, accept our thanks and praise  
for all who have served you faithfully here on earth,  
and especially for those dear to our own hearts ...

May we and all your people,  
past, present and to come,  
share the life and joy of your kingdom,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## The invitation and the gracious words

All those present may be invited to share in the Lord's Supper.

Hear the gracious words of  
our Lord Jesus Christ;

Come to me,  
all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

I am the bread of life;  
whoever comes to me will never be hungry,  
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

Anyone who comes to me  
I will never drive away. John 6:37

## The Peace

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with you all.

*All* **Peace be with you.**

## Offertory

The offerings of the people are collected. The bread and wine may be brought to the table or, if already present, are uncovered.

Let us pray.

*All* **Eternal God,  
we come with these gifts  
to offer our sacrifice of praise  
and the service of our lives;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

## Hymn

This hymn may be sung while the money, bread and wine are brought to the table, in which case the offertory prayer follows the hymn.

## **The narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper**

Hear the narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper as it was recorded by the apostle Paul.

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

## The taking of the bread and wine

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and following his example,  
we take this bread and this cup,  
and give thanks to God.

## The Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts.

*All* **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*All* **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

With joy we give you thanks and praise,  
Almighty God, Source of all life and love,  
that we live in your world,  
that you are always creating and  
sustaining it by your power,  
and that you have so made us  
that we can know and love you,  
trust and serve you.

We give you thanks  
that you loved the world so much  
that you gave your only Son,  
so that everyone who has faith in him  
may not die but have eternal life.

[A seasonal or other special thanksgiving may follow here.](#)

We thank you that Jesus was born among us  
that he lived our common life on earth;  
that he suffered and died for us;  
that he rose again;  
and that he is always present  
through the Holy Spirit.

We thank you that we can live in the faith  
that your kingdom will come,  
and that in life, in death and beyond death  
you are with us.

Therefore with all the company of heaven,  
and with all your people,  
of all places and times,  
we proclaim your greatness and sing your praise.

*All* **Holy, holy, holy Lord  
God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Blessed is he  
who comes in the name of the Lord.

*All* **Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy Lord God,  
by what we do here  
in remembrance of Christ  
we celebrate his perfect sacrifice on the Cross  
and his glorious resurrection and ascension;  
we declare that he is Lord of all;  
and we prepare for his coming in his kingdom.  
We pray that through your Holy Spirit  
this bread may be for us the body of Christ  
and this wine the blood of Christ.

Accept our sacrifice of praise;  
and as we eat and drink at his command  
unite us to Christ as one body in him,  
and give us strength to serve you in the world.

And to you, one holy and eternal God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
we give praise and glory, now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

### The breaking of the bread

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed  
took bread and when he had given thanks,  
he broke it and said,  
'This is my body which is for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.'  
In the same way also the cup saying  
'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.  
Do this, as often as you drink it,  
in remembrance of me.'

If the narrative of the institution has been used earlier in the service, as the bread is broken the Minister may say:

The bread which we break  
is the communion of the body of Christ.

And as the cup is raised the Minister may say:

The cup of blessing which we bless  
is the communion of the blood of Christ.

## The Sharing of the bread and wine

In giving the bread the Minister says:

Take, eat – this is the body of Christ  
which is broken for you;  
do this in remembrance of him.

or

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
given for you.

In giving the cup the Minister says:

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ,  
shed for you and for many  
for the remission of sins: drink of it.

or

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, shed for you.

## The acclamation

Let us praise the Lord.

*All* **Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.  
Blessing and honour  
and glory and power  
be to our God for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

## Prayer after Communion

Let us pray.

Most gracious God,  
we praise you for what you have given  
and for what you have promised us here.  
You have made us one  
with all your people in heaven and on earth.  
You have fed us with the bread of life,  
and renewed us for your service.

Now we give ourselves to you;  
and we ask that our daily living  
may be part of the life of your kingdom,  
and that our love may be your love  
reaching out into the life of the world;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Hymn or doxology

## Dismissal and blessing

Go in peace to serve the Lord;  
and the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Seasonal Thanksgivings

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## Advent

We praise you  
that through his coming  
your promises given by the prophets were fulfilled,  
and that the day of our deliverance has dawned;  
and, as we look for the triumph of his kingdom,  
we exult with holy joy.

## Christmas

We praise you that he took our nature  
and was born as the child of Mary,  
that he might share our life,  
reveal your love and reconcile us to yourself,  
and give us power to become  
your sons and daughters.

## Epiphany

We praise you that he is the light of the world  
through whom we are brought  
out of darkness into light,  
and that by him your glory  
has been revealed to the nations.

## Lent

We praise you that because of his likeness to us  
he was tested in every way yet without sin,  
and that having endured and overcome temptation

he is able to help us in our times of trial,  
and to give us strength to take up the cross  
and follow him.

## **Passiontide**

We praise you that for us and for our salvation  
he humbled himself  
and in obedience accepted even death –  
death on a cross;  
and that he bore our sins  
in his body on the tree  
that we being dead to sin  
should live to righteousness.

## **Easter**

We praise you  
that after he had suffered  
and been put to death on the cross  
he was raised from the dead by your power;  
that he is the true Lamb of God  
who takes away the sin of the world;  
and that by his glorious resurrection  
he has restored us to eternal life  
and given us the joy of your kingdom.

## **Ascension**

We praise you  
that having suffered and died for us  
and being raised from the dead  
he lives and reigns for ever in your glory,  
and so fulfils his promise  
to be with us always to the end of the age.

## **Pentecost**

We praise you that according to the promise of Christ  
the Holy Spirit came to fill the Church with power;  
and that the Spirit comes to us today  
that we being renewed and strengthened  
may proclaim the Gospel to the world.

# Baptism service

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This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here.

**There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used and these are indicated by the orange boxes.**

Where possible, the sacrament of baptism should follow the reading of Scripture and the proclamation of the Word. This service may be used for either baptism by full immersion or by pouring water over the candidate's head.

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**Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)**

# Introduction

God, the source and fount of all creation, is here.

*All* **The Holy Spirit is with us.**

Jesus Christ came that we might have life

*All* **and have it in all its fullness.**

In John's Gospel we read that Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.'

John 3:5

God, our Creator, made each one of us, knows us and loves us. Even before we come to know God for ourselves, God's heart is full of love for us. Though such knowledge and love are more than we can imagine, God invites us, in baptism, to accept it with the openness and trust of a child. In the waters of baptism, our names are written on the heart of God, whose love is stronger than death.

Jesus himself was baptised by John in the river Jordan and that baptism found fulfilment in the cross, as he gave himself for the life of the world. Christ's journey from death to resurrection then becomes the pattern for our lives, as we live in union with him.

**Short extracts from Scripture: (of which one or two might be selected)**

But now thus says the LORD: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

Isaiah 43:1b-2a

Paul writes: 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with Christ by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you...

Ezekiel 36:25a, 26-27a

Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.'

Acts 2:38-39

Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep'.

John 21:15 ff

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

Ephesians 5:8, 14b

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At whatever age we come, baptism marks a new beginning in our lives as Christians and we are made members, with others, of the one Church. In baptism we are called to take up the Cross and to follow Christ in the company of all God's people from all times and places. Because we cannot do this without the grace of God, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to live as God's people and to serve God's purposes in the world. We acknowledge one baptism, in obedience to Christ.

After rising from the dead, Jesus said to his disciples:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. Matthew 28:18-20a

## The Proclamation of Faith

A large candle such as an Easter (Paschal) candle may be lit.

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed or a Statement of Faith of the United Reformed Church may be used (see the statement of faith approved by General Assembly in 1997, produced here in a responsive form), or a hymn of faith may be sung.

Let us proclaim the faith of the Church through the ages:

We believe in the one and only God, Eternal Trinity, from whom, through whom and for whom all created things exist.

*All* **God alone we worship;  
in God we put our trust.**

We worship God,  
source and sustainer of creation,  
*All* **whom Jesus called Father,  
whose sons and daughters we are.**

We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ,  
the eternal Word of God made flesh;  
who lived our human life,  
died for sinners on the cross;  
who was raised from the dead,  
and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God;  
*All* **who lives eternally,  
as saviour and sovereign,  
coming in judgement and mercy,  
to bring us to eternal life.**

We worship God, ever present in the Holy Spirit;  
who brings this Gospel to fruition,  
assures us of forgiveness,  
*All* **strengthens us to do God's will,  
and makes us sisters and brothers of Jesus,  
sons and daughters of God.**

We believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,  
united in heaven and on earth:  
on earth, the Body of Christ,  
*All* **empowered by the Spirit to glorify God  
and to serve humanity;  
in heaven, eternally one  
with the power, the wisdom and the love of God in Trinity.**

We believe that, in the fullness of time,  
God will renew and gather in one  
all things in heaven and on earth through Christ,  
and be perfectly honoured and adored.

*All* **We rejoice in God who has given us being,  
who shares our humanity to bring us to glory,  
our source of prayer and power of praise;  
to whom be glory, praise and adoration,  
now and evermore.**

**Amen.**

## The Affirmations

**Two forms of affirmation for the baptismal promises  
are included here and two others may be found in the  
Basis of Union Schedule A. These are the only forms  
authorised for use by the General Assembly of the  
United Reformed Church.**

By the candidate for believer's baptism either:

Do you believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
giver of life, redeemer of the world?

**I do.**

Do you repent of your sins, turn away from evil, and turn  
to Christ?

**By God's grace, I do.**

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

**I do.**

(The affirmations continue after the baptism at the point of reception into the full privileges and responsibilities of membership.)

or

A form including the following elements:

- a Trinitarian confession of faith
- repentance of sin
- a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord

An example:

Do you believe that God is the Creator of all things,  
that Jesus perfectly embodies divine love,  
and that the Holy Spirit moves in your heart?

**I do.**

Are you ready to reject all that is wrong in your life and  
in the world, and turn to walk the way of Jesus Christ?

**I am.**

Do you accept Jesus as your Saviour and give your life  
to him?

**I do.**

## Statement or Testimony

A short statement or testimony, telling the story of their coming to faith, may be given by the person to be baptised either here or later at confirmation.

To the parent(s) or those bringing the child to be baptised

... A ... and ... B ... , you have come for the baptism of ... N ... in response to the call of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Let us hear that you confess your faith in Christ.

Do you believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
giver of life, redeemer of the world?

**I/We do.**

or

Do you believe that God is the Creator of all things,  
that Jesus perfectly embodies divine love,  
and that the Holy Spirit moves in your heart?

**I/We do.**

Where a child is old enough to make a response, a form such as the following may be used in addition:

... N ... , do you believe that Jesus loves you, and calls you to follow him?

**I do.**

# Prayer

The Minister pours water into the font or baptistery.

God of love,  
we thank you for the gift of water,  
the foundation of life and the first of our needs.  
As it fills this vessel  
and washes human flesh,  
open the eyes of our hearts  
to see the holy meaning it carries  
and to know that you are present.  
Let this be a new beginning,  
a recreation of a human life.  
Let this be a sign of your love and mercy,  
of the healing of life's wounds  
and the promise of salvation.  
Let this be a sacrament of your grace,  
an act of commitment to Christ,  
and a revealing of your Holy Spirit.  
Come, living God, eternal love,  
who gives form to Creation,  
is seen in Jesus Christ,  
and known in the Holy Spirit,  
draw us this day  
into the love you share  
with Son and Spirit,  
that ... N ... . may be made holy  
and receive a new life  
as one of your own,  
in the company of your people,  
now and forever,

*All* **Amen.**

or

Blessed are you, God of all creation.  
In your goodness, you give us water  
to sustain our life and renew the earth.  
May it be for ... N ... the water of new birth.

*All* **Blessed be God forever.**

Gracious God, we thank you for your love in all creation,  
especially for the gift of water,  
to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life.  
In the beginning you moved over the waters  
and to a formless void brought light and life.  
You once parted the waters of a sea  
to lead your people out of slavery  
to freedom in a land of promise.  
Your Son was baptised in the waters of the Jordan  
and your Spirit was upon him.  
He fulfilled his baptism upon the cross and was raised from  
death  
that we might have eternal life.  
Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this water,  
that ... N ... , being born anew of water and the Spirit,  
may remain for ever in the number of your faithful children,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be all honour and glory, now and forever.

*All* **Amen.**

# The Baptism

In the case of believer's baptism, an Elder and/or sponsors may stand with the candidate; in the case of infant baptism, with the baptismal party. The candidate is immersed in water or has water poured over their head.

... N ... , I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the God who loves, the beloved Christ and the very Spirit of love.

The minister may make the sign of the Cross on the forehead of the newly-baptised person. Others (such as Elders, sponsors, family members) may also do so.

... N ... , I sign you with the Cross, the sign of Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

## Declaration of Baptism

... N ... , child of God, God receives you by baptism into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

*All* **Amen.**

The congregation may say or sing the blessing of Aaron (Numbers 6:24-26):

May God bless and protect you,  
May God smile on you and be kind to you,  
May God look on you with love and bring you peace.

or

God is the One who'll bless and keep you;  
yours is the radiance from God's face.

God is the One who calls and meets you;  
yours is the promise of God's grace.

God is the One whose favour holds you;  
yours is the gift of love to claim.

God is the One whose peace enfolds you;  
yours is the bearing of God's name.

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*Suggested tune: Spiritus Vitae ('O Breath of life,  
come sweeping through us')*

or

The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.

*(See Rejoice and Sing 420 for a sung version of these words)*

## The Promises

**Two forms of affirmation for the baptismal promises are included here and two others may be found in the Basis of Union Schedule A. These are the only forms authorised for use by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.**

When the newly baptised is able to answer for themselves, reception into the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership follows, in the form of confirmation.

We are now to receive ... N ... into the full privileges and responsibilities of church membership.

From the beginning, believers have continued in the worship and fellowship of the Church.

... N ... , do you commit yourself to this life?

**I do, with God's help.**

With the whole Church, will you proclaim by word and action the good news of God in Christ?

**I will, with God's help**

Other promises may be added or inserted:

eg: Do you accept the gift and cost of following Christ in your daily life and work?

**I do with God's help.**

or

Another form of words may be used that includes a promise to share in the worship, fellowship and mission of the church.

An example:

Will you pray and worship, at home and with others?

**I will**

Will you offer your gifts and time to the life of the Church and so belong with us to Christ?

**I will**

Will you join in telling the good news and share in service to the community?

**I will**

Will you pursue justice and peace, and care for God's creation, our common home?

**I will.**

## Promise by the congregation

As a community of faith, representing the whole Church, do you welcome ... N ... and promise to share with them what you yourselves have received, the gift of God's love revealed in Christ?

*All* **We do with God's help.**

## When the newly baptised is an infant, those bringing the child for baptism make these promises

From early times the Church has received the children of believers by baptism so that with help and support they may grow up in Christ, and by the grace of God serve Christ all their days.

This child belongs to God in Christ. Tell ... N ... of their baptism that they may know they are baptised and may come to make their own response of faith and love.

Do you promise to teach ... N ... the love of God and bring them up in the life and worship of the Church?

**I do with God's help**

## Promises by the sponsor(s) and/or Elder(s)

Do you promise to pray for ... N ... , and their home and family, and to support them as you are able, sharing with them Christ's love?

**I do, with God's help.**

## Promise by the congregation

As a community of faith, representing the whole Church, do you welcome ... N ... and promise to share with them what you yourselves have received, the gift of God's love revealed in Christ?

*All* **We do with God's help.**

## The Confirmation or Strengthening in Faith

Come now to receive the laying-on of hands with prayer, to strengthen you for the work of God.

The newly baptised person kneels. The Minister and at least one Elder place their hands on their head, as the Minister prays:

God of all grace, confirm and strengthen ... N ... in the power of the Holy Spirit, that they may shine like light in the world, grow in strength and depth of faith, and come at last to the fulness of the maturity of Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

(The Minister may anoint the newly confirmed with oil as a symbol of the anointing of God's Holy Spirit)

The newly confirmed member stands.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the Church, and in accordance with the decision of this local church meeting, we welcome you into membership of this congregation of the United Reformed Church.

May your sharing in our life together bring blessing to you and to us all.

The Minister and Elder(s) may offer a sign of welcome.

A Bible or other appropriate book and a certificate of Baptism and/or Confirmation may be presented.

*All* **In the name of Christ we welcome you.  
May we grow together in unity,  
and be built up into the body of Christ in love,  
to the glory of God, the eternal and Holy Trinity.  
Amen.**

A baptismal candle may be lit from an Easter (Paschal) candle and either placed on the table or given to the new member.

Shine as a light in the world.  
*All* **To the glory of God.  
Amen.**

## Hymn

### Prayers of Intercession

These should include prayer as appropriate for the newly baptised (and confirmed), *their* family, and the church.

If the service does not continue with the Lord's Supper, the newly baptised (and confirmed) and those accompanying them may lead the congregation out of the church after the final blessing.

# Confirmation service

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## Reaffirmation of Baptism and admission to Church Membership

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For those baptised at some time in the past who come to make their own confession of Christian faith and enter into the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of Christ's Church.

This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here.

**There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used and these are indicated by the orange boxes.**

The service follows after the reading of Scripture and the proclamation of the Word.

**Two forms of affirmation for baptismal promises are included in number 3, and two others may be found in the Basis of Union, Schedule A. These are the only forms authorised for use by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.**

**Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)**

1. Introduction .....	H3
2. Proclamation of faith .....	H4
3. The affirmations .....	H5
4. Statement or testimony .....	H7
5. The promises .....	H7
6. The confirmation, or strengthening in faith.....	H9
7. Welcome .....	H10

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book)

## Introduction

By the sacrament of baptism we are all made one in the Body of Christ. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live as the people of God and to serve God's purpose. In baptism God says 'Yes' to us. Today, in response to the call of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit, ... N ... comes to affirm *their* baptism, to say 'Yes' to God, to make *their* own profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and to be received into the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of Christ's Church. By confirmation *they* are promised the strengthening of the Holy Spirit so that *they* may be a faithful follower/s of Christ and member of the Church.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

John 15:5, 7-9, 16-17

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Ephesians 2:19-22

## Proclamation of faith

A large candle, such as an Easter (Paschal) candle, may be lit.

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed or a Statement of Faith of the United Reformed Church may be used (see the statement of faith approved by General Assembly in 1997 [here in a responsive form), or a hymn of faith may be sung.

Let us proclaim the faith of the Church through the ages:

We believe in the one and only God, Eternal Trinity, from whom, through whom and for whom all created things exist.

*All* **God alone we worship;  
in God we put our trust.**

We worship God,  
source and sustainer of creation,

*All* **whom Jesus called Father,  
whose sons and daughters we are.**

We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ,  
the eternal Word of God made flesh;  
who lived our human life,  
died for sinners on the cross;  
who was raised from the dead,  
and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God;

*All* **who lives eternally,  
as saviour and sovereign,  
coming in judgement and mercy,  
to bring us to eternal life.**

We worship God, ever present in the Holy Spirit;  
who brings this Gospel to fruition,  
assures us of forgiveness,

*All* **strengthens us to do God's will,  
and makes us sisters and brothers of Jesus,  
sons and daughters of God.**

We believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,  
united in heaven and on earth:

on earth, the Body of Christ,

*All* **empowered by the Spirit to glorify God  
and to serve humanity;  
in heaven, eternally one  
with the power, the wisdom and the love of God in Trinity.**

We believe that, in the fullness of time,  
God will renew and gather in one  
all things in heaven and on earth through Christ,  
and be perfectly honoured and adored.

*All* **We rejoice in God who has given us being,  
who shares our humanity to bring us to glory,  
our source of prayer and power of praise;  
to whom be glory, praise and adoration,  
now and evermore.**

## The affirmations

**Two forms of affirmation are included below, and two others may be found in the Basis of Union, Schedule A.**

**These are the only forms authorised for use by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.**

The Elder responsible for their pastoral care or another sponsor may present the candidate to the congregation with appropriate introduction.

Either:

... N ... , you have come in response to the call of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit to confess your faith in Christ. Do you believe and trust in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, maker of heaven and earth, giver of life, redeemer of the world?

**I do.**

Do you repent of your sins, turn away from evil, and turn to Christ?

**By God's grace, I do.**

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

**I do.**

or a form including the following elements:

- a Trinitarian confession of faith
- repentance of sin
- a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord

An example:

Do you believe that God is the Creator of all things, that Jesus perfectly embodies divine love, and that the Holy Spirit moves in your heart?

**I do.**

Are you ready to reject all that is wrong in your life and in the world, and turn to walk the way of Jesus Christ?

**I am.**

Do you accept Jesus as your Saviour and give your life to him?

**I do.**

## Statement or testimony

A short statement or testimony, telling the story of their coming to faith, may be given by the person to be confirmed.

## The promises

The words used upon affirmation of faith are included below, and two others may be found in the Basis of Union, Schedule A. These are the only forms authorised for use by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

... N ... has made confession of *their* faith.  
Now *they* are to make *their* promises  
as *they* are received into the full privileges  
and responsibilities of Church membership.

From the beginning, believers have continued in the worship and fellowship of the Church.

... N ... , do you commit yourself to this life?

**I do, with God's help.**

With the whole Church, will you proclaim by word and action the good news of God in Christ?

**I will, with God's help.**

Other promises may be added or inserted:

eg: Do you accept the gift and cost of following Christ in your daily life and work?

**I do with God's help.**

Another form of words may be used that includes a promise to share in the worship, fellowship and mission of the church.

An example:

Will you pray and worship, at home and with others?

**I will**

Will you offer your gifts and time to the life of the Church and so belong with us to Christ?

**I will**

Will you join in telling the good news and share in service to the community?

**I will**

Will you pursue justice and peace, and care for God's creation, our common home?

**I will.**

## Promise by the congregation

As a community of faith, representing the whole Church,  
do you welcome ... N ... and promise to share with *them* what  
you yourselves have received, the gift of God's love revealed  
in Christ?

*All* **We do, with God's help.**

## The confirmation, or strengthening in faith

... N ... , may God open your eyes to see the glory around  
you, your ears to hear the breaking in of God's reign and your  
mouth to share good news. Come now to receive the laying  
on of hands with prayer to strengthen you for the work of God.

The candidate may kneel or stand for a moment of silent  
prayer. The Minister and at least one Elder place their hands  
on the head of the candidate(s) as the Minister prays:

God of all grace, confirm and strengthen N in the power of  
the Holy Spirit, that they may shine like light in the world,  
grow in strength and depth of faith, and come at last to the  
fullness of the maturity of Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

The Minister may anoint the newly confirmed member with  
oil as a symbol of the anointing of God's Holy Spirit.

All may say or sing Aaron's blessing (Numbers 6:24-26)

May God bless and protect you,  
May God smile on you and be kind to you,  
May God look on you with love and bring you peace.

or

God is the One who'll bless and keep you;  
yours is the radiance from God's face.  
God is the One who calls and meets you;  
yours is the promise of God's grace.

God is the One whose favour holds you;  
yours is the gift of love to claim.  
God is the One whose peace enfolds you;  
yours is the bearing of God's name.

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*Suggested tune: Spiritus Vitae ('O Breath of life,  
come sweeping through us')*

or

**All** The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.

*(See Rejoice and Sing 420 for a sung version of these words)*

The newly confirmed member stands.

## Welcome

... N ... , by baptism you were received into membership of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. You have now affirmed your baptism and confessed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. You have accepted the privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the only head of the Church, and in accordance with the decision of this local church meeting, we welcome you into membership of this congregation of the United Reformed Church. May your sharing in our life together bring blessing to you and to us all.

One of the following texts, or another appropriate to the newly-confirmed member, may be used.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

For once you were darkness, but now in Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, ‘Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’

Ephesians 5:8, 14

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

The Minister and Elder(s) may offer a welcome.

A Bible, or other appropriate book, and a Confirmation certificate may be presented.

The congregation may say together:

*All* **In the name of Christ we welcome you.  
May we grow together in unity,  
and be built up into the body of Christ in love,  
to the glory of God, the eternal and holy Trinity.  
Amen.**

The service continues with the Lord's Supper. The new member(s) may bring forward the bread and wine.

After the dismissal and blessing the Minister (and Elders) may lead the new member(s) through the church and members of the congregation may be encouraged to greet them.

# Reception of members

---

This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here.

For use when members are being received into membership of a local congregation by transfer from another congregation or by re-affirmation of faith.

This follows the reading of Scripture and proclamation of the Word.

1. Introduction .....	12
2. The affirmation .....	12
3. The welcome .....	14

**Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)**

## Introduction

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only head of the Church, and in accordance with the decision of this local church meeting, we now receive ... N ... by transfer from ... X ... Church/ by reaffirmation of faith into membership of this congregation of the United Reformed Church.

(Other words, appropriate to the circumstances, may be used)

## The affirmation

By baptism ... N ... has been received into membership of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. *They* have also affirmed *their* baptism, confessed *their* faith in Jesus Christ, and accepted the privileges and responsibilities of membership of the one Church.

If appropriate, reference may be made to previous membership.

(We rejoice in the pilgrimage that has brought *them* to this time and place. We give thanks to God for every community of faith that has nurtured *their* faith along the way, and for *their* desire to join with us in Christian faith and discipleship.) As *they* come to unite with us in this congregation (or to renew *their* membership of the church) we invite *them* to re-affirm *their* confession of faith, and to promise to live as a faithful member of this fellowship.

... N ... , do you confess anew your faith in the one God,  
Eternal Trinity,  
from whom and through whom all created things exist,  
the God whom Jesus called Father,  
and who is ever present with us in the Holy Spirit?

Do you promise to share with us in the life of this church, and to be faithful in the privileges and responsibilities of church membership?

**I do, with God's help.**

or

... N ... , do you confess anew your faith and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, maker of heaven and earth, giver of life, redeemer of the world?

**I do.**

Do you promise to continue in the worship and fellowship of the Church in this congregation, accepting the gift and cost of following Christ, and proclaiming by word and action the good news of God in Christ?

**I do, with God's help.**

### **Promise by the congregation**

In welcoming ... N ... as a fellow member in the life of this church, do you promise your friendship in Christ, and will you give *them* your support in prayer and service, so that *they*, with us, may continue to grow in the knowledge and love of God and witness to the Gospel?

**All We do, and with God's help, we will.**

God of grace, you call us to be your people, and gather us into the body of Christ. We thank you for sending us ... N ... to work with us in serving your church and your world. Confirm us all in the power of your grace to live in your Spirit, to love each other and to share the mind of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**All Amen.**

## The welcome

The Minister and one or more of the Elders greet the new member(s).

They may, for example, offer ‘the right hand of fellowship’.

Paul wrote in Galatians 2:9;

‘...when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognised the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship.’

So we, recognising the grace that is in you, shake your hand.

The congregation may say together:

*All* **In the name of Christ we welcome you.  
May we grow together in unity,  
and be built up into the body of Christ in love,  
to the glory of God, eternal and holy Trinity,  
now and forever.  
Amen.**

The service may continue with the Lord’s Supper. The new member(s) may bring forward the bread and wine.

# Thanksgiving for the birth of a child

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## The dedication of parents and the blessing of children

---

This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here.

**Where possible the act of thanksgiving should follow the reading of Scripture and proclamation of the Word. It is most appropriate when other children in the congregation are present. The act looks forward to baptism at a point in the future and is therefore not a substitute for baptism.**

1. Introduction.....	J2
2. The Word.....	J2
3. Thanksgiving, dedication and blessing .....	J3
4. Prayers .....	J5

**Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)**

## Introduction

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

Psalm 106:1

We come together as part of the family of God. We welcome especially ... A ... and ... B ... , who have come to give thanks to God for the birth of their child ... N ... , to seek God's blessing upon *their child (children)*, and to dedicate themselves [again] to the responsibilities of parenthood. We share in their thanksgiving. We acknowledge the claim of *this child/these children* upon the prayers and support of this church both now and in the years ahead. We welcome *them* as Jesus welcomed little children; and we affirm that it is the duty of parents and the Church together to show the love of God in their lives, so that in due time this child may come to confess *their* own faith in Jesus Christ, and be baptised.

## The Word

One or both of the following readings are read.

We read in the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.  
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

We read in the New Testament:

People were bringing little children to [Jesus] in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them

Mark 10:13-16

## Thanksgiving, dedication and blessing

All stand. The Minister asks the parents:

Do you thank God for the gift of ... N ... ?

**We do.**

Do you, as parents, dedicate yourselves to God?

**We do.**

Do you promise so to order your lives that ... N ... will be surrounded by love and goodness?

**We do.**

Where parents are not members the following question may be omitted:

Do you promise, by God's help, to provide a Christian home for ... N ... and to bring *them* up in the faith of the Gospel and the fellowship of the Church?

**We do.**

If there are older children in the family the Minister may include a suitable promise for them to make.

May God bless you and give you grace faithfully to carry out these promises;  
and may God grant you joy and patience, love and peace.

To the congregation:

On behalf of the whole Church of Jesus Christ, we undertake to provide for the instruction of ... N ... in the gospel of God's love, the example of Christian faith and character, and the strong support of the family of God in prayer and friendship.

Do you promise to pray for ... N ... , and *their* family, and to support *them* as you are able, sharing with them Christ's love?

**We do.**

Then the Minister, laying one hand upon the child's head, says:

The blessing of God, the source and fount of all life,  
be upon you.

The blessing of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, God's well-beloved child, be upon you.

The blessing of God, present with us through the tender love of the Holy Spirit, be upon you,  
this day, and always.

All **Amen.**

or

... N ... , the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, now and always.

All **Amen.**

or the blessing of Aaron:

May God bless and protect you,  
May God smile on you and be kind to you,  
May God look on you with love and bring you peace.

or

God is the One who'll bless and keep you;  
yours is the radiance from God's face.  
God is the One who calls and meets you;  
yours is the promise of God's grace.

God is the One whose favour holds you;  
yours is the gift of love to claim.  
God is the One whose peace enfolds you;  
yours is the bearing of God's name.

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*Suggested tune: Spiritus Vitae ('O Breath of life,  
come sweeping through us')*

or as at Rejoice and Sing 420

The Minister or Elder may present a Bible to the parents.

## Prayers

God our creator, we thank you for the gift of ... N ... .  
We thank you for the love that prepared for *their* coming and  
welcomed *them* into the world,  
and we rejoice with ... A ... and ... B ... in their hopes for  
the future.

Be with them in their home; guide them in the upbringing of their child and deepen their knowledge and love of Christ. Give us grace so to live that they, their family, and every kind of family, may find in the Church a source of strength and love. God of love, we commend ... N ... to your care. Give *them* health of body and mind, happiness and fulfilment in *their* days, and in due time draw *them* to come to you in baptism, to make *their* own profession of faith in you, and to commit *their* life to Christ. May *they* grow in kindness, goodness and service to others, and learn to walk in the ways of peace, courage and love; through Jesus Christ our Saviour,

*All* **Amen.**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)

# Service of the Word

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When God’s people gather for worship a service of the Word may be used. This outline draws on classic patterns of Reformed worship and is offered as one model. It is simple and adaptable, having a three-fold structure based around the reading and exposition of Scripture: preparing to hear God’s Word; hearing God’s Word and responding to God’s Word. The resources which follow provide a variety of material for a service of the Word. They are drawn from a wide range of liturgical voices and are indicated by **the numbers in brackets**.

## Preparing to hear God’s Word

Call to worship (1) .....	K3
Hymn/Song	
Prayers of Approach, Adoration and Confession (2) ....	K4
Assurance of Pardon (3) .....	K9

## Hearing God’s Word

Theme introduction	
Prayer for grace, or collect for the day (4) .....	K10
Reading from Scripture	
Psalm or hymn or song	
Reading(s) from Scripture	
Hymn or song	
Sermon or other Exposition of the Word	

## Responding to God’s Word

Hymn or song	
--------------	--

An affirmation of faith may be used (optional, eg *Rejoice and Sing* 759, 749, 752)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession (5) .....	K10
Offering prayers (6) .....	K14
Hymn or song	
Blessings (7) .....	K14

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## (1) Call to worship

Let us worship God.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

*All* **Amen.**

O God, your loving kindness is better than life itself;  
*All* **our lips shall give you praise.**

So we will bless you as long as we live  
*All* **and lift up our hands in your name.**

or

Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,  
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.

*All* **Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus beckons us to a way of risk,  
letting go of our security.

*All* **Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus challenges us to listen  
to the voices of those who have nothing to lose.

*All* **Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,  
where despair is transformed by the promise of new life.

*All* **Let us walk his way with joy.**

or

We are God's people.  
How good it is that we have all come  
– women and men, young and old –  
to worship God who creates us;  
how good it is that we are gathered  
to meet Jesus Christ – God's living word;  
how good it is that we seek together  
signs of the Holy Spirit,  
whom we cannot catch or subdue.  
Come, let us worship God.

## **(2) Prayers of Approach, Adoration and Confession**

All-holy God,  
you call us together to be your holy people,  
and so we join to give you praise  
    for the joy of our creation;  
    for our redemption in Christ;  
    for the empowerment of your Spirit.

Gracious God,  
fill our hearts with your love  
and our lives with your glory  
as we come before you in worship and prayer  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** **Amen.**

Intimate God,  
we praise you because you know each one of us;  
the worries that nag us, the achievements we are proud of,  
the hopes and expectations that we hold,  
half-recognised, in our hearts.

We praise you for what we know of you;  
the ways in which you have welcomed and met us,  
your quiet, constant, presence in our lives.

And we praise you for what we do not yet know;  
the mysteries of your creation,  
the questions that baffle us,  
the wonders of discovery awaiting us.

Unknown God,  
may we be open to meet with you in unexpected ways;  
discerning your presence in what is strange to us,  
and seeing the familiar with newly-opened eyes.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Wise and Holy One  
you are  
beyond our imagination  
beyond our understanding  
beyond our humanity;  
and because you are beyond us  
we turn to you for sanctuary  
we come to you for protection.

Wise and Holy One  
you are not completely beyond our imagination,  
because Jesus Christ shows us what you are like;  
you are not completely beyond our understanding  
because Jesus Christ teaches us the way;  
you are not completely beyond our humanity  
because Jesus Christ is one of us.

And because you are beside us  
we can walk alongside you as a companion  
we can speak honestly with you as a friend  
we can keep silence with you as a lover.

Wise and Holy One  
not completely beyond us,  
not only beside us but deep within our being.  
Spirit of God  
when we feel confused,  
help us to make sense of life and offer it to others;  
when we feel abandoned,  
help us to know your love and share it with others;  
when we feel at a loss,  
help us to rediscover hope and offer it to others;  
when we fail to love you,  
help us to know your forgiveness and share it with others;  
encourage us to leave what is past and travel on,  
with you and all your people,  
into your glorious future.

*All* **Amen.**

*and/or*

God of love and mercy,  
we come before you  
knowing that we are in need of forgiveness.

We have sinned against you  
in our speaking and in our silence;  
in our thinking and in our thoughtlessness;  
in our actions and in our inaction.

We have sinned against you,  
in not loving you with our whole heart  
and soul and strength;  
in not loving our sisters and brothers in Christ.  
Grant us, O Lord, your forgiveness,  
restore us in the image of your Son,  
and lead us along the way to your kingdom,  
to the glory of your name.

*All* **Amen.**

*or*

O God,  
we have come together to turn to you  
as your people have gathered before.  
With Christians over the centuries and across the world,  
with all your people of all places and times,  
we have come.

We bring with us everything we are,  
all our gifts and talents,  
all that we do well and for good.  
We bring our weakness  
and our sorrow  
and every way in which we fail.

We come in the hope and expectation  
that we shall find you here in this company of people,  
as the scriptures are read and interpreted  
and as the music and the words touch our spirits.

We pray that as we learn to follow Jesus, your Son,  
we may be saved from all that harms us,  
that we may become the people you made us to be  
and that we may find strength to do good in the world  
so that your will may be done.

God the Creator, we praise you.  
God in Christ, we turn to you.  
God the Comforter, we call upon you.

Blessed be God, forever.

O God of justice,  
we have heard your commandments  
and they are a gift to us.  
Yet we have failed always to live by them.  
For this we are sorry and we turn to you for forgiveness.  
We have not loved you wholeheartedly.  
We have failed in love to our neighbours  
and to our selves.  
We have not loved our enemies  
or blessed those who do us harm.  
We live in an unjust world,  
where many are hungry,  
and there is little peace.

Lord have mercy upon us.

### (3) Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!  
Who is to condemn?  
It is Christ Jesus,  
who died,  
yes,  
who was raised,  
who is at the right hand of God,  
who indeed intercedes for us.

Romans 8:34

So if anyone is in Christ,  
there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;

see, everything has become new!

2 Corinthians 5:17

*All*

**Amen.**

Receive God's gift of forgiveness  
and be at peace.

*or*

O God,  
your heart is full of mercy.  
May we hear and trust your words to each of us:  
'Your sins are forgiven.'  
May we forgive each other  
and forgive ourselves.

Thanks be to God.

*All*

**Amen.**

## (4) Prayer for grace

O Lord, heavenly Father,  
in whom is the fullness of grace and wisdom,  
enlighten our minds by your Holy Spirit,  
and give us grace to receive your Word  
with reverence and humility,  
without which no-one can understand your truth.  
For Christ's sake.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Eternal God,  
who longs for us to know all good things  
and to walk along a peaceful path,  
open the eyes of our hearts  
that we may see the way to life,  
open our ears that we may hear the truth,  
and open our lips that we may praise you,  
this day and all our days,  
in Jesus' name.

*All* **Amen.**

## (5) Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Loving God,  
we give you thanks and praise  
for all that you have done for us.

For your whole created universe  
bursting with life and infinite possibilities,  
a universe created and yet still being created.

For the beauty and fragility of our spinning planet,  
the blue oceans, swarming with life,  
and the green and verdant earth.

For our fellow human beings,  
people of many colours, of many languages,  
of many abilities, yet all your children.

We give you thanks  
for the life, death, and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.  
For the message which he brings,  
for the life in us which he renews,  
and the example he has given us to follow.

We give you thanks for the Holy Spirit,  
sweeping through all of life with boundless energy,  
at once as gentle as the breath of a child,  
and yet as fierce as a raging storm,  
lifting us up in your grace.

Hear us, Lord,  
as in our own hearts and minds  
we give you thanks for your presence in our lives ...

**Silence**

For all these things we give you our joyous praise,  
through your Son, Jesus Christ  
and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**All Amen.**

or

God, Maker and Lover of all,  
we know that your way is not always easy;  
that peace is not given lightly,  
that sometimes justice comes only through struggle.

We pray for the places in your world  
where we long to see justice  
and dream of peace.

We remember especially the peoples of ...  
where conflicts seem so long-standing and complex  
that we cannot imagine resolution;  
and we pray for wisdom and reconciliation ...

We remember communities divided by poverty and racism,  
especially ...  
where the gaps between privilege and powerlessness  
seem to grow ever wider;  
and we pray for justice and healing.

We remember your church,  
sometimes fragmented and confused,  
where in spite of division,  
your people seek to live out the Gospel;  
and we pray for joy and a new sense of the Spirit's power.

We remember our friends, neighbours and ourselves,  
especially ...  
in those areas of our lives where we struggle  
to be true to what we have learned of you;  
and we pray for faithfulness and courage.

God, Maker and Lover of us all  
who summons us in Jesus to the way of the cross,  
and empowers us to live by your Spirit,  
hear our prayer.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Liberating God,  
we bring our prayers for those whose lives are limited,  
by their own attitudes or beliefs,  
by the pain of their circumstances,  
by the actions of others,  
seeking for all confidence to journey in freedom.

We pray for those worn down by illness,  
or exhausted by caring for others,  
longing to feel the freshness and energy  
of a bright new day.

We pray for those confined by oppression,  
their opportunities limited by prejudice,  
longing to experience the possibility  
of travelling on an open road.

We pray for those limited by their own lack of self-worth,  
held back by doubts and fears, and repeated rejection,  
longing to walk with the confidence  
of striding out freely along their own path.

We pray for those trapped in poverty,  
their energies sapped by the struggle against greed  
and injustice,  
longing to know the abundance  
of an earth where resources are freely shared.

*All* **Amen.**

## (6) Offering prayers

Eternal God  
we come with these gifts  
to offer our sacrifice of praise  
and the service of our lives;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Loving God, we bring these our gifts,  
in thanksgiving for all that you have given us;  
asking that we may be servants of others  
and witnesses to your love.  
In the name of Jesus Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Generous God  
we bring our gifts to you  
with cheerfulness and joyful hearts.  
Give us courage that with these gifts  
we may also offer our minds, bodies and spirits,  
ready and willing to show the truth of the Gospel in our lives.

*All* **Amen.**

## (7) Blessings

May the God of hope  
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope  
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

*All* **Amen.**

or

The blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with you, now and forever.

*All* **Amen.**

or

May the God whose longing is for justice  
and whose passion is for the freedom of all  
strengthen us to work for all that makes for peace;  
and the blessing of the living God,  
Creator, Redeemer and Spirit  
be with us all, now and always.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Let us go out into the world  
as bringers of love  
as makers of peace  
as messengers of hope  
knowing that the blessing of God, the source of life,  
of Jesus Christ, the way to life,  
and of the Holy Spirit, the sustainer of life,  
is with us today, tomorrow and forever.

*All* **Amen.**

# Daily worship

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This is based around the Lord's Prayer and may be used by individuals or in a group setting. The use of movement and/or symbols may be appropriate.

## Our Father in heaven

A candle is lit and the Bible is opened.

Let us wait upon the Lord, God of heaven and earth.  
Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.

One of these Scripture sentences, or another appropriate to the season, is read.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you,  
says the Lord. Isaiah 66:13a

'Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.'  
Psalm 46:10

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice,  
and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?  
Micah 6:8b

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the Lord! Psalm 27:14

As a father has compassion for his children,  
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.  
Psalm 103:13

Jesus said 'Remember, I am with you always,  
to the end of the age.'  
Matthew 28:20b

Silence

## Hallowed be your name

O Lord open our lips:  
*All* **and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:  
*All* **for his steadfast love endures for ever.**

A Psalm is read or sung.

*All* **Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever.  
Amen.**

**Your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven**

The following prayer, or another for God's kingdom, is used:

God of all,  
your kingdom is the coming of peace and justice,  
the dawn of your tender mercy and compassion.

Your kingdom is seen in Jesus Christ,  
your will for all is lived out in his teaching and healing,  
his dying and rising to new life, for the world.  
Your kingdom is in our midst,  
your Spirit is at work, here and now,  
so we pray:

Among all who suffer ...  
Your kingdom come:

*All* **Your will be done.**

Among our families and friends ...  
Your kingdom come:

*All* **Your will be done.**

In our community ...  
Your kingdom come:

*All* **Your will be done.**

In our nation ...  
Your kingdom come:

*All* **Your will be done.**

Among the nations of this world ...  
Your kingdom come:

*All* **Your will be done.**

In the life of your Church, across the world and in this place ...  
Your kingdom come:

*All* **Your will be done.**

And in our living this day ...  
Your kingdom come:

*All* **Your will be done.**

**In Jesus' name.**  
**Amen.**

# Give us today our daily bread

Listen for the word God speaks today:

*All* **feed us, Lord, with your Word.**

or

God of life, make us hungry for your justice:

*All* **challenge us with your Word of Life.**

or

Open your word to us, Lord:

*All* **give us ears to hear and minds to receive.**

or

Lord, break the bread of your word among us:

*All* **and nourish us with your truth.**

Readings from Scripture.

Hear the word of the Lord:

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

Silence

## **Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us**

Let us confess our sins to God and resolve to accept and share his forgiveness.

Silence

Lord God most merciful,  
*All* **we confess that we have sinned,  
through our own fault,  
and in common with others,  
in thought, word and deed,  
and through what we have left undone.**

**We ask to be forgiven.**

*All* **By the power of your Spirit  
turn us from evil to good,  
help us to forgive others,  
and keep us in your ways  
of righteousness and love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Assurance of pardon

[In words of Scripture such as these.](#)

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,  
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners –  
of whom I am the foremost. 1 Timothy 1:15

Our sins are forgiven for his sake.  
*All* **Thanks be to God.**



or

*All* **Help us, God of truth and mercy,  
to act justly,  
to love tenderly  
and to walk humbly with you,  
this and every day.  
Amen.**

or

*All* **God of grace, clothe us with the armour of Christ,  
and defend us from all evil.  
Empower us by your Spirit,  
that we may wear truth and integrity,  
walk the way of peace,  
hold fast to faith and salvation  
and carry your word of life within us.  
For we pray in the name of Christ,  
who for the sake of us all,  
hung naked on a cross.  
Amen.**

or

*All* **God of grace,  
pour your love into our hearts;  
pour your Spirit into our being;  
create within us new hearts and minds  
and lead us in the way of Christ.  
Amen.**

or

*All* **Strengthen us for your service, Lord.  
Lead us in your way of peace.  
Amen.**

**For the kingdom,  
the power and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen**

---

A New Testament Canticle or hymn is read or sung.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever.

Ephesians 3:20-21

*All* **Amen.**

The grace

*All* **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore.  
Amen.**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.unc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.unc.org.uk/worship-book)

# Evening worship

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1. The gathering of the people .....	M2
2. Psalm verses and the lighting of candles .....	M2
3. Hymn or song .....	M3
4. Prayer for Christ's presence .....	M3
5. The Lord's Prayer .....	M3
6. A night Psalm .....	M3
7. Meeting with Christ at evening time .....	M4
8. Gospel reading .....	M5
9. Reflection on the Gospel .....	M5
10. Hymn or song .....	M6
11. Prayers of Intercession .....	M6
12. Hymn or song .....	M8
13. The song of Simeon .....	M8
14. Blessing .....	M8

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# The gathering of the people

The people gather and wait in silence.  
The lights are dimmed.

## Psalm verses and the lighting of candles

Where appropriate the words may be shared by a number of voices.

O Lord, God of my salvation,  
when, at night, I cry out in your presence, let my prayer  
come before you;  
incline your ear to my cry. Psalm 88:1-2

(after silence, a candle is lit)

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.  
Psalm 92:1-2

(after silence, a second candle is lit)

Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and for  
evermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting the name  
of the Lord is to be praised. Psalm 113:2-3

(after silence, a third candle is lit)

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

*All* **Come bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord,  
who stand by night in the house of the Lord!  
Lift up your hands to the holy place,  
and bless the Lord.**

May the Lord, maker of heaven and earth,  
bless you from Zion.

Psalm 134

## Hymn or song

### Prayer for Christ's presence

As the darkness falls and the shadows grow ...

*All* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

When we are tired and weary and longing for rest ...

*All* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

While the business of the world goes on  
and when there is no silence ...

*All* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Whenever we meet together to curse the darkness  
and to light a flame for justice ...

*All* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

While we cannot find your peace in the world  
and long for your blessing ...

*All* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

As we join in the great circle of prayer with all your saints ...

*All* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

**Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

### A night Psalm

Psalm 139 or one of the other night psalms (4,33, 34, 91,  
134, 136) may be sung or said.

## Meeting with Christ at evening time

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.'

John 3:1-2a

### Silence

Let us, in the quietness of evening,  
open our minds and hearts to receive the teaching of Christ,  
so that we may learn to follow him  
and find courage to go with him,  
even on the way of the cross.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door.

Mark 1:32-33

### Silence

May we, who have gathered here at sundown,  
bring our pain and suffering to Christ,  
and bring our prayers for others,  
that all may find healing and freedom  
in the presence of God.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'.

John 20:19

### Silence

Let us, who come bearing many fears,  
and marked by disappointment and failure,  
find here the reconciling peace which Christ gives,  
the hope of new beginnings,  
and the promise of the coming dawn.

They urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight. Luke 24:29-31

### Silence

*All* **Lord Jesus Christ,  
we have gathered for prayer as the day is nearly over.  
Though we cannot see you before us,  
enlighten the eyes of our hearts,  
that we may recognise your presence  
and know that you are with us,  
and will stay beside us,  
this night and for evermore.  
Amen.**

## Gospel reading

### Reflection on the Gospel

A short spoken reflection may follow or a guided meditation. A picture, icon or painting may illuminate the text. Someone may lead a discussion. A poem may be read or a piece of music played. Or silence may be kept.

### Prayers of Intercession

either

Let us pray for the Church, for the world  
and for all who are suffering.

We pray for peace among the nations,  
for the unity of the Church,  
and for the healing of our hearts.

*All* **I call upon you, O Lord, come quickly to me;  
give ear to my voice when I call to you.** Psalm 141:1

We pray for justice in business and in government,  
for true community in the Church,  
and for goodness in all our deeds and words.

*All* **Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,  
and the lifting up of my hands  
as an evening sacrifice.** Psalm 141:2

We pray for food and drink for the hungry,  
for rescue for those in peril and danger,  
for comfort for those sorrowing or deeply troubled.

*All* **I call upon you O Lord, come quickly to me;  
give ear to my voice when I call to you.**

We pray for those who find the night long and bleak,  
for those who cry out for the morning,  
that they may know the presence of God in the dark hours.

**All** Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,  
and the lifting up of my hands  
as an evening sacrifice.

We pray for those new born this day,  
for those celebrating or remembering a significant time,  
and for those newly baptised and received into the Church.

**All** I call upon you O Lord, come quickly to me;  
give ear to my voice when I call to you.

We pray for those who are close to death,  
that they may find peace and rest,  
and be received into God's eternal presence with all the saints.

**All** Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,  
and the lifting up of my hands  
as an evening sacrifice.

Silence

We pray these and all our prayers  
in the name of Christ.

**All** I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the Lord.  
Amen.

Psalm 130:5-6a

or

The people may be invited to light a candle as a symbol of  
prayer and to say

'I light this candle for ...'

## Hymn or song

### The song of Simeon

*All* Now, Lord, let your servant go in peace:  
your word has been fulfilled.  
My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:  
a light to reveal you to the nations,  
and the glory of your people Israel.

### Blessing

The blessing of God be yours:  
the God who makes the darkness light,  
the Saviour who is light to the world,  
the Spirit who brings us peace,  
this night and always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Prayers for healing and laying-on of hands

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1. Call to worship .....	N3
2. Opening responses .....	N3
3. Hymn .....	N4
4. Prayer of Confession .....	N4
5. Affirmation and Assurance of Pardon .....	N4
6. The Lord's Prayer .....	N5
7. Offering .....	N5
8. Hymn or chant .....	N6
9. Reading(s) .....	N6
10. Sermon or reflection .....	N6
11. Hymn or chant .....	N6
12. Prayers of Intercession .....	N6
13. Invitation .....	N7
14. Hymn .....	N8
15. The laying-on of hands .....	N8
16. Anointing with oil.....	N8
17. Closing prayer and blessing .....	N10

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Before the service the leader explains that it will include prayer for the healing of people and situations as well as the laying-on of hands for any who wish it.

The laying-on of hands may be done in different ways. It is always helpful when two or more people, who may have helped to lead other parts of the service, share in this. Some congregations have teams of people who administer the laying-on of hands. Other churches invite people to participate in giving as well as receiving the laying-on of hands. People need to feel valued and at ease whether or not they are actively involved at this point. It is best if those who share the leadership of the laying-on of hands begin or finish by ministering to one another. Where anointing takes place, a little olive oil is normally placed on the forehead in the form of a cross, after the laying-on of hands.

Prayers of intercession can be a time of silence during which people may call out names. Alternatively, names may be collected first and grouped into

different concerns, or gathered from pieces of paper on a board or prayer tree. Using only first names helps to show that God knows us all. Not specifying the illness or distress may help the prayer to focus on health. Prayers could be for healing in body, mind and spirit, for relationships and situations, for the bereaved and dying, and for the healing of the nations. It is good to include those in the medical services and all aspects of healing and reconciliation, as well as giving thanks for those who are recovering. It is helpful to involve more than one voice in leading these prayers.

Any sermon or reflection should be brief and lead on to the intercessions and laying-on of hands. This may offer the chance to clarify an aspect of the service that relates to the Bible passage, or a short piece of prose or poetry may be used to shed light on the reading. The address could even come before the reading on occasions.

At the end of the service people may wish to stay in quietness for a while.

## Call to worship

Jesus said:

Come to me, all you that are weary  
and are carrying heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;  
for I am gentle and humble in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:28-29

or

Jesus said:

Ask, and it will be given to you;  
search, and you will find;  
knock, and the door will be opened for you.

For everyone who asks receives,  
and everyone who searches finds,  
and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Luke 11:9-10

## Opening responses

God beyond us,  
forming us in your own likeness,  
delighting in all that you create:

*All* **we turn to you,  
we are made by you,  
our hearts are restless  
till they find their rest in you.**

God beside us,  
companion on the road,  
who has come to give us life in all its fulness:

*All* **we listen for you,  
we yearn for you,  
we seek your healing touch.**

God within us,  
closer than our breathing,  
present at the heart of all that is:

*All* **we are waiting for you,  
we are open to you,  
as you waken us with promise of new life.**

Silence

Hymn

## Prayer of Confession

Living God,  
always near to those who call on you:  
make us confident in prayer, joyful in praise,  
and responsive to your word,  
that we may know your peace in our hearts  
and your healing in our lives.

Loving God,  
in silence we ask you to lift from us  
all that weighs us down  
or spoils our relationship with others  
or separates us from you.

Silent confession

## Affirmation and Assurance of Pardon

You are merciful to me, O God,  
in your faithful love.

*All* **You cleanse me of my sin  
and remove the guilt that clings.**

You desire deep and inner truth:  
you accept me as I am.

*All* **You create in me a pure heart  
and renew me from within.**

You restore to me the joy of your salvation;  
you support and strengthen me.

*All* **You open my lips  
that my mouth may proclaim your praise.**

You accept the offering  
of a broken spirit.

*All* **A broken and a contrite heart  
you do not despise.**

Jesus says: Your sins are forgiven.

Christ has set us free.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

## The Lord's Prayer

### Offering

*An offering may be taken here or after the intercessions.*

Generous God, we bring to you our gifts,  
our prayers, ourselves.

Let our gifts be used well,

our prayers be sincere

and our lives reflect your generosity and love.

So may our offering be acceptable to you;  
and may we be ready to receive  
your healing and your grace.

*All* **Amen.**

## Hymn or chant

## Reading(s)

## Sermon or reflection

## Hymn or chant

## Prayers of Intercession

Let us bring before God  
those who are on our hearts and minds,  
all for whom prayer has been requested  
and any who have asked us to remember them.

Let us pray:

Loving God,  
long ago people brought their friends to Jesus,  
or approached him on behalf of others.  
So now we bring to you  
those who need your help.

Prayers for healing, caring, reconciliation and thanksgiving,  
which may conclude:

God of compassion and love,  
we offer you all our suffering and pain.  
Give us strength to bear our weakness,  
healing even when there is no cure,  
peace in the midst of turmoil  
and love to fill the spaces in our lives.

Glory to God, from whom all love flows,  
glory to Jesus, who showed his love through suffering,  
and glory to the Holy Spirit,  
who brings light to the darkest places.

*All* **Amen.**

## Invitation

People who are able to come forward are invited to do so, during or after the next hymn, for the laying-on of hands. If anointing with oil is offered this may also be mentioned. Any who remain in their seats are invited to hold in prayer those receiving and administering the laying-on of hands. It is made clear that those ministering will come to any who are unable to move forward. The invitation ends with these or similar words:

This is God's word, the word of your creator:  
'Do not be afraid – I will save you.  
I have called you by name – you are mine.  
When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you;  
your troubles will not overwhelm you.'

So come with your fears and your hopes,  
come with your sadness and your regrets,  
come with your pain and your doubt,  
come with whatever faith you have.  
Whether the storm is around you or within,  
the Saviour holds you;  
you are not alone.

### The laying-on of hands

In preparation for the laying-on of hands, the following prayer may be said:

Compassionate God, encircle us as we reach out in love.  
Wounded Christ, touch us in our weakness and our strength.  
Life-giving Spirit, breathe through us, channels of your peace.

As hands are laid on each person in turn, the following prayer may be said:

Healing Spirit of God,  
at work in Jesus,  
present here and now,  
fill your whole being,  
free you of all harm,  
and give you peace.

*All*

**Amen.**

### Anointing with oil

When some present request anointing each is told:

I anoint you with oil of gladness  
in the name of Jesus Christ.

after anointing:

Rise up and take courage:  
God is all around you,  
banishing the darkness  
and bathing you in light.

or

Turn your face to Christ:  
his mark is upon you  
as, through all your days,  
he gently leads you home.

or

Lift up your head:  
the Spirit is within you,  
cleansing and renewing you,  
bringing you new life.

When some present request anointing each is told:

I anoint you with oil of gladness  
in the name of Jesus Christ.

and when this has been completed all are addressed  
together:

Lift up your head  
and seek the face of Christ.  
His spirit is within you,  
cleansing and renewing;  
his presence is around you,  
bathing you in light;  
his mark is upon you,  
as, through all your days,  
he gently leads you home.

## Closing prayer and blessing

When all have returned to their places:

*All* **May the Christ of all that has been  
and all that is to come  
stay by our side through daylight and darkness,  
heal us of the wounds of the past,  
and welcome us into the future.**

Go in peace,  
protected by God,  
befriended by Christ,  
empowered by the Holy Spirit,  
and held by the prayers of the people.  
And the blessing of the sacred Trinity of love  
go with you now and always.

*All* **Amen.**

# The Lord's Prayer

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## First Form

*All* Our Father in heaven  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

## Second Form

*All* Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

or

*All* **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory, for ever.  
Amen.**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

# Marriage service

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The phrases marked by a star \* and in bold italic print are alternative forms of the words required by law in England and Wales.

If local churches in England and Wales apply to register their buildings for marriage, they are expected to send in a sample order of service. The pages below give such a sample, which is informed by the traditions and order of the United Reformed Church, and meets the requirements of the law in England and Wales. It is of course part of our tradition that ministers may depart from a printed order, for example in the wording of prayers, the choice of readings, or the ordering of items within the service. But there is prescribed wording to follow at two key points in the service – when the couple declare themselves free to marry, and when they take one another as husband or wife. Attention is drawn to this legal requirement in the order below; it is essential to observe it.

The law also requires that the terms “husband” and “wife” are used regardless of whether the couple are of the opposite or same sex so, if two women are being married, they be referred to in the service as ‘wife’ and ‘wife’; similarly two men must be referred to as ‘husband’ and ‘husband’.

In Scotland the legal test for a service is whether an ordinary person observing would consider a marriage is being contracted, therefore no set words are proscribed by law. The words in bold italic script, with an asterisk, are required by law in England and Wales.

***The doors of the church building must be left open for the duration of the service.***

1.	Welcome and introduction .....	P3
2.	Hymn or song .....	P4
3.	Statement of purpose .....	P4
4.	Prayer .....	P5
5.	Readings from Scripture .....	P5
6.	Sermon .....	P6
7.	Declarations.....	P6
8.	Legal declarations .....	P6
9.	Prayer for Assurance and sincerity .....	P8
10.	The Vows .....	P9
11.	The giving and receiving of rings .....	P11
12.	Prayer .....	P12
13.	Blessing the couple .....	P13
14.	Declaration of Marriage .....	P13
15.	Greeting.....	P14
16.	Hymn or song .....	P14
17.	Blessing .....	P14
18.	Alternative vows .....	P15

# Welcome and introduction

Welcome to ... church,  
for the celebration of the marriage between A and C.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and  
the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us worship God.  
This is the day that the Lord has made;

*All* **let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

or

Love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave ...  
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.  
Psalm 118:24

Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm;  
for love is strong as death,  
passion fierce as the grave.  
Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
a raging flame.  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
neither can floods drown it.  
If one offered for love  
all the wealth of one's house,  
it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Songs 8:6b-7a

or

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

1 John 4:16b

or

Jesus said:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

John 13:34

## Hymn or song

## Statement of purpose

We have come together in the presence of God to witness the marriage of AB and CD, to rejoice with them and to ask God to bless them in their life together.

Marriage is an act of commitment between two people before witnesses. In marriage AB and CD make a solemn covenant before God to live out their lives in faithfulness and loyalty to each other. In their new life together they are called to enrich society, to strengthen community, and share their worldly goods with each other and with those in need.

Marriage is not to be entered into lightly or thoughtlessly but reverently and responsibly. This is the way of life that A and C have chosen. They come to accept each other freely, to give their consent to each other in solemn promises, and to ask for God's blessing.

## Prayer

Eternal God,  
you are with us this day  
in the fullness of your love.  
Your love fills our hearts  
and draws us to one another with holy desire.  
Your love in us offers forgiveness  
and sets us free to be together in peace.  
Your love creates community  
and heals our deepest loneliness.  
This love you renew continually in A and C  
and in all your people.  
Make them today a sign to us of your love in all creation,  
of your enduring affection and faithfulness,  
and of your joy in all that you have made.  
May we see this day, before our eyes,  
the joy of love and the hope of faith.  
Bless our celebration with your presence  
and touch us with your Spirit,  
in Christ's name we pray, Amen.

## Prayer Readings from Scripture

Some suggested readings:

*Old Testament :*

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a, Psalm 23, Song of Songs 7:10-13

*New Testament:*

Matthew 5:1-9, Mark 10:6-9, John 2:1-1,  
1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 13, Ephesians 3:14-21, 1 John 4:7-19

The readings and the sermon may come later in the service,  
after the marriage ceremony.

## Sermon

The readings and the sermon may come later in the service, after the marriage ceremony.

## Declarations

The Minister says to the couple:

Before God and before this congregation,  
I will ask you to declare your freedom and readiness to enter into the covenant of marriage.

I will also ask your families and this congregation to affirm their willingness to support you today and in the years to come.

### **Legal declarations:**

Due notice of the intention of AB and CD to be married has been given and no objection has been made.

or

I ask the congregation: if you know of any reason in law why AB and ... CD ... may not be joined in marriage, please declare it now.

To the couple:

I ask you, ... A ... and ... C ...to declare that you know of no reason in law that you may not be married.

As required by law each one declares in the presence of the Authorised Person, or the Registrar, and two witnesses:

***I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, ... AB ... may not be joined in marriage to ... CD \****

***I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, ... CD ... may not be joined in marriage to ... AB \****

or

***I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, ... AB may not be joined in matrimony to ... CD \****

***I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, ... CD, may not be joined in matrimony to ... AB \****

or

Are you, ... AB ... , free lawfully to marry ... CD ... ?

***I am. \****

Are you, ... CD ... , free lawfully to marry ... AB ... ?

***I am. \****

# Prayer for Assurance and Sincerity

O God of all faithfulness,  
we pray for those who will make promises today:  
bless them with sincerity and give them your grace.  
May A and C know that their love  
is both your will and your delight.  
May the promises they make govern the life they will lead.  
May your presence surround them,  
your faithfulness encourage them,  
your Spirit strengthen and guide them.  
**Amen.**

## The couple are asked

A and C, will you take one another, to share in the bond of marriage?  
Will you love, comfort, honour and protect one another,  
in times of prosperity and health and in times of trouble and suffering?  
And will you be faithful to one another as long as you both shall live?

**We will.**

## If either, or both, has children:

Will you promise to be faithful, loving and caring parents to N (and N)?

**We will.**

The immediate family is asked:

Will you, the families of A and C, give your blessing to their marriage  
and will you always support and encourage them?

**We will.**

The congregation is asked:

Will you, the friends of A and C, support and encourage them  
in their marriage?

**We will.**

## The Vows

As required by law in England and Wales each one declares  
in the presence of the Authorized Person, or the Registrar,  
and two witnesses: One of the following, made by each  
partner:

I call upon these persons, here present, to witness that  
I, A.B., do take thee, C.D., to be my lawful wedded wife/  
husband. \*

or **I, A.B., take you, C.D., to be my wedded  
wife/husband. \***

or **I, A.B., take thee, C.D., to be my wedded  
wife/husband. \***

N.B. If two men are being married they must be referred to in the above as 'husband' and 'husband'\*; similarly two women being married must be referred to as 'wife' and 'wife' \*.

Whatever other words may be added to these declarations and contracting words, one each of those given above must be included for the marriage to be valid. Otherwise the authorised person may ask for them to be repeated before the registers are signed.

The contracting words may be expanded to include traditional liturgical promises, provided that the marriage is taking place in a registered church building. For example ....

**I, ... AB ... , take you (thee), ... CD ... , to be my wedded husband/wife:\***  
**in accordance with God's holy will,**  
**to have and to hold from this day forward,**  
**for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,**  
**in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish**  
**till death us do part. This is my solemn vow.**

**I, CD, take you (thee), AB, to be my wedded husband (or wife):\***  
**in accordance with God's holy will,**  
**to have and to hold from this day forward,**  
**for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,**  
**in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish**  
**till death us do part. This is my solemn vow.**

# The giving and receiving of rings

The rings are given to the Minister who prays:

Eternal God, whose love encircles us all, bless the giving and receiving of these rings.

May they be signs of a love which never ends, beautiful, holy and strong.

May they be tokens of commitment and faithfulness and reminders of the promises and vows made today.

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (*Creator, Christ and Spirit.*)

**Amen.**

Each says in turn:

**I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage.  
With my body I honour you,  
all that I am I give to you,  
all that I have I share with you, within the holy love  
of God.**

or

**I give you this ring in God's name  
as a sign of all that we have promised and all that we  
shall share.**

If only one ring is used, the Minister prays:

Eternal God,  
whose love encircles us all,  
bless the giving and receiving of this ring.

May it be a sign of a love which never ends, beautiful, holy and strong.

May it be a token of commitment and faithfulness

and a reminder of the promises and vows made today.  
In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Creator,  
Christ and Spirit.)

All **Amen.**

## Prayer

Most gracious God, source of all true love,  
we give you thanks that ... A ... and ... C ... have answered  
your call

and have given themselves today to one another in the  
covenant of marriage.

Pour out the fullness of your blessing on them.

Lead them into that love which never comes to an end.

Give them grace to forgive when words or actions hurt.

Give them strength to persevere through times of testing  
and to support each other through darkness and distress.

May they be thankful for all that has brought them to this  
moment.

May they joyfully embrace this new beginning, and journey  
on with ever new delight.

Bless their families and friends, that they may be a constant  
source of strength.

Bless their home, that it may be a place of welcome.

*(Bless them in the gift of children, that they may be wise and  
loving parents).*

Bless all who celebrate with A and C that love may flourish  
and friendship touch the lonely.

And grant that we, who today have witnessed  
the sharing and exchange of words and signs of love,  
may find our faith renewed and our hope restored.

May love, the greatest of all your gifts, stronger than death,  
gentle as a touch,  
bring us through every passing moment  
closer to Jesus Christ, our lover and our Lord.  
**Amen.**

## Blessing the Couple

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious  
to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.  
**Amen.**

Numbers 6:24-26

## Declaration of Marriage

A and C have declared before God and before you that they  
will live together  
in the bond of marriage.  
They have made promises to one another, have exchanged  
solemn vows  
and have symbolised their marriage today  
by joining hands and by giving and receiving rings.  
I therefore declare them to be married  
in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (*Creator,  
Christ and Spirit.*)  
Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate.

## Greeting

The couple may kiss. The congregation may applaud.  
The sign of Peace may be shared.

## Hymn or song

The service may continue with readings and a sermon (if these have not been included earlier), with prayers and with singing. It should end with a closing blessing of the whole congregation.

**The registration papers must be signed, either within the service or directly afterwards.**

## Blessing

May God who is light shine in your darkness.  
May God who is love be the love between you.  
May God who is life be your life everlasting.  
And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
(Creator, Christ and Spirit)  
be with you all, now and for ever,  
**Amen.**

or

May the God who made us for one another, who loves us  
with a faithful love  
and whose spirit makes us passionate and strong, bless you  
and embrace you, now and for ever,  
**Amen.**

## Alternative Vows

Please recall that, whatever variations you include in a service, in England and Wales there may be no variation at all to the legally required portions of the service (see the boxed sections above).

### Text A

I, ... AB ... , take you (thee), ... CD ... , to be my wedded **husband/wife**.\*

I declare my love for you.

I give myself to you as your **wife/husband** in Christian marriage.

From this day, I will share with you in sorrow and joy,

in poverty and prosperity, in sickness and health.

I will love you and honour you.

I promise to be faithful to you, until death parts us.

This is my vow.

### Text B

I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, ... AB ...take thee, ... CD ... ,

to be my lawful wedded **husband/wife**: \*

in accordance with God's holy will, to have and to hold

from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,

in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part. This is my solemn vow.

## Text C

I call upon these persons here present to witness  
that I, ... AB .. take thee, ... CD ... ,

to be my lawful wedded **husband/wife**: \*

I declare my love for you.

I give myself to you as your **wife/husband** in  
Christian marriage.

From this day, I will share with you in sorrow and  
joy,

in poverty and prosperity, in sickness and health.

I will love you and honour you.

I promise to be faithful to you, until death parts us.

This is my vow.

Downloadable versions of this section, in  
PDF and Word format, can be found online  
here: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)

# Blessing of Marriage

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This service may be used after a civil marriage. It may take place in a church building or another place – on the same day as the civil marriage or on a subsequent occasion. It is desirable that Elders and members of the local church are present, along with the person conducting the service (normally a minister), to make evident and real the presence of the Church.

A service of blessing does not supersede or invalidate any marriage previously solemnised and no record should be entered in a marriage register.

This service may be used for opposite and same sex marriages.

1. Welcome.....	Q2
2. Hymn or song .....	Q3
3. Prayer .....	Q3
4. Statement .....	Q4
5. Prayer .....	Q5
6. Readings from Scripture.....	Q5
7. Sermon .....	Q5
8. Hymn or song .....	Q5
9. The Promises .....	Q6
10. The Rings .....	Q7
11. The Prayer of Blessing .....	Q9
12. Declaration .....	Q9
13. Greeting.....	Q9
14. Hymn or song .....	Q10
15. Blessing.....	Q10

# Welcome

The Minister welcomes the people and continues:

Welcome to ... church,  
for the celebration of the marriage between A and C.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord  
Jesus Christ.

Let us worship God.

This is the day that the Lord has made;

*All* **let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

or

Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm;

for love is strong as death,  
passion fierce as the grave.

Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
a raging flame.

Many waters cannot quench love,  
neither can floods drown it.

If one offered for love  
all the wealth of one's house,  
it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Songs 8:6b-7a

or

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and  
God abides in them.

1 John 4:16b

or

Jesus said: I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

John 13:34

## Hymn or song

## Prayer

Eternal God,  
you are with us this day  
in the fullness of your love.  
Your love fills our hearts  
and draws us to one another with holy desire.  
Your love in us offers forgiveness  
and sets us free to be together in peace.  
Your love creates community  
and heals our deepest loneliness.  
This love you renew continually in A and C  
and in all your people.  
Make them today a sign to us of your love in all creation,  
of your enduring affection and faithfulness,  
and of your joy in all that you have made.  
May we see this day, before our eyes,  
the joy of love and the hope of faith.  
Bless our celebration with your presence  
and touch us with your Spirit,  
in Christ's name we pray,  
**Amen.**

## Statement

A and B have been married in law.  
They have made solemn vows  
and have contracted to live together as  
husband and wife or as faithful partners or as husbands  
or as wives  
until death parts them.

Now they come before God, in the presence of the Church,  
to ask for a blessing for their marriage.

We rejoice in the love they share  
and gladly pray for the blessing of God upon them.

In marriage, the partners promise to be faithful, in good times  
and in bad,

and to honour one another for all their days.

(In marriage, children may be born and grow up, in the  
security of a loving home.)

In marriage, a new community is made  
and all may celebrate a sign of unity and faithfulness.

Marriage is a gift and a calling,  
and God's blessing strengthens us  
to live according to the promises we have made.

## Prayer

Let us pray

Eternal God,  
whose love is always faithful and whose promises never fail,  
we pray for A and B  
as they ask for your blessing on their marriage.  
Strengthen them by your Spirit,  
that they may remember the vows they have made,  
grow in love and honour for one another  
and live according to your holy will.  
Fill them with joy, guide them in future days  
and surround them with your love,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

## Readings from Scripture

Some suggested readings:

*Old Testament:*

Psalm 67

*New Testament:*

Philippians 4:4-9, Colossians 3:12-17

Matthew 5:1-9, John 2:1-11

## Sermon

## Hymn or song

## The Promises

Each partner says in turn

... B ... , you are my husband/wife.

I promise to be faithful to you, to love and honour you,  
to comfort and protect you, as long as we both shall live.  
This is my solemn promise.

If either, or both, has children the Minister may say to the couple:

Do you promise to include ... N ... (and ... N ... )  
within the circle of your love?

**We do.**

[Do you promise to care for the children you now have,  
and to welcome those who may be given to you?

**We do.]**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

## The Rings

If rings have not been exchanged at the civil marriage they are given to the minister who prays:

Eternal God,  
whose love, like a circle, never ends, we pray that these rings may be signs of unending faithfulness. Give A and B a love that lasts,  
joy in one another, and years of peace together.  
And may your presence, the perfect Trinity of love, be always with them.

**Amen.**

If there is only one ring, the Minister prays:

Eternal God,  
whose love, like a circle, never ends, we pray that this ring may be a sign of unending faithfulness.  
Give A and B a love that lasts, joy in one another, and years of peace together. And may your presence, the perfect Trinity of love, be always with them.

**Amen.**

Each partner says in turn:

I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage.  
With my body I honour you,  
all that I am I give to you,  
all that I have I share with you, within the holy love of God.

or

I give you this ring in God's name  
as a sign of all that we have promised  
and all that we shall share.

The minister prays:

God our Creator,  
you make us in your image,  
and bless us with the gift of love.  
In the longing of our bodies,  
the passion of love's touch  
and the strong bonds of affection,  
your love and blessing are already known.  
We pray for your blessing to be upon  
A and B married in your sight.  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
who once blessed a wedding by turning water into wine,  
we pray that A and B may taste the good wine  
of a happy and joyful marriage. Holy Spirit,  
bless them with your gifts of love and joy,  
of peace, patience and kindness,  
that they may be good for one another through the years  
to come,  
and have strength to go on  
through times of sorrow and struggle. May your love, bound  
with theirs, keep them faithful to one another,  
and close to you all the days of their life,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

# The Prayer of Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

**Amen.**

Numbers 6:24-26

## Declaration

The minister says:

A and B you are married  
and have declared your commitment to one another,  
before your friends, and before God.  
In the presence of the Church,  
in the strength of God's grace,  
you have made solemn vows.  
Let no-one separate you.  
Be together always.

## Greeting

The couple may kiss. The people may applaud. The sign of Peace may be shared.

## Hymn or song

### Blessing

May God who is light shine in your darkness.  
May God who is love be the love between you.  
May God who is life be your life everlasting.  
And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
*(Creator, Christ and Spirit)*  
be with you all, now and for ever,  
**Amen.**

or

May the God who made us for one another,  
who loves us with a faithful love  
and whose spirit makes us passionate and strong,  
bless you and embrace you, now and for ever,  
**Amen.**

# Funeral services

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Worship offered with the dying and after a death needs to be prepared and conducted with dignity, grace and sensitivity.

The mourners want to do what is right to give honour to the one who has died. The Church seeks to minister to those who grieve, to proclaim that God's presence is with us in every sorrow, and that Christ is victorious over death itself.

In recent times there have been significant changes in the ways in which funerals are conducted, giving rise to a wide variety of practice. Whereas a service in church followed by a committal used to be quite normal, now these may take place the other way round.

Some mourners want a simple service at the crematorium and a further act of worship as the ashes are scattered or buried. The receiving of the body into church on the night before the funeral, and prayers around the coffin, are other possibilities to

consider. Those who grieve are increasingly taking a more active part in planning the worship and in contributing to it. Practices and customs vary across different regions. Sometimes innovation is sought, and sometimes simply the comfort of tradition.

For all these reasons, a variety of resources have been provided here, all of which are available online. The first service has brought together familiar material in a new and more readily usable way. It has taken much of the best of the 1980 and 1989 books and recast them in a service which is both simple and easy to use. This service is one of powerful witness to the Resurrection. The second service has been newly written for this publication. It draws from pastoral theology a strong awareness of the experience of grief and the changes which any death brings. It does not assume what people feel, but provides a space for the expression of

what they genuinely experience. People in the congregation are encouraged to be active and to participate in the service, which draws deeply from the traditions of our faith while setting them in a modern context. The third service is simpler in format and language, and reflects the down-to-earth immediacy which is an important part of our tradition.

All the services (and the further material online) may be used

creatively and freely, as a source of material and ideas rather than prescriptive texts. Every funeral service, like every human life, is unique and brings its own special circumstances. There is always more to do than read from 'the book'.

A selection of readings appropriate for funeral services is provided in full at the end of the funeral section.

**URC Worship Additional Resources to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book)**

# Services for a Funeral – One

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## Prayers with the dying

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1. Scripture sentence .....	R2
2. Prayer of Assurance .....	R2
3. The Lord's Prayer.....	R2
4. Commendation at the time of death .....	R3
5. <i>Nunc Dimittis</i> .....	R4
6. Prayers with the family .....	R4

Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)

When death is near the Minister may be asked to be with the one who is dying and their family, loved ones and carers.

## Scripture sentence

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

## Prayer of Assurance

Gracious God,  
look upon ... N ... , (*your child through baptism,*)  
may *they* know your love now and always;  
the love from which nothing  
in life or death can ever separate us.  
And may *they* be comforted  
with the promise of eternal life,  
given in the resurrection of your Son, our Saviour.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

## Commendation at the time of death

Depart, O Christian soul, out of this world:  
in the name of God the Father almighty, who created you;  
in the name of Jesus Christ, who redeemed you;  
in the name of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies you;  
may you rest in the peace of God's eternal kingdom.

Into your hands, O merciful Saviour,  
we commend your servant ... N ... .  
Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you,  
a sheep of your own fold,  
a lamb of your own flock,  
a sinner of your redeeming.  
Receive *them* into the arms of your mercy,  
into the blessed rest of everlasting peace,  
and into the glorious company of the saints in light.

*All* **Amen.**

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life,  
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,  
the busy world is hushed  
the fever of life is over and our work is done:  
then, Lord, in your mercy, grant us safe lodging,  
a holy rest and peace at the last:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## *Nunc Dimittis*

Now Lord you let your servant go in peace:  
your word has been fulfilled.  
My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:  
a light to reveal you to the nations,  
and the glory of your people Israel.

## Prayers with the family

Loving God, we turn to you now in our need.  
The moment of death has come.  
May we find the strength and faith  
to release ... N ... to you,  
confident that *they* may know the joy  
of your eternal keeping.  
You have shared these last days and hours  
as you share all our days.  
Stay close to us in the days to come.  
Be our good shepherd,  
light for our darkness, hope for our sorrow.  
Hold us now and always  
in the comfort and peace of your love.  
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Holy and gracious God,  
we thank you that death is past  
and you welcome home your precious child, ... N ... .  
As we have waited and watched and prayed,  
you have been with us.  
Because you love us so much  
we may trust ... N ... to your mercy  
and ourselves to your care.  
We thank you for the years shared,  
the precious memories that remain,  
the legacy of love that is treasure beyond price.  
Now we turn to you for hope, strength and comfort,  
and cling to your promise to be with us always.  
Guide us in the ways of your love  
and lead us to the glory of your eternity.

*All* **Amen.**

# Service before a Funeral

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This order may be used when a service is requested at the home, at the chapel of rest, or in church at some time before the funeral.

1. Scripture sentences.....	R7
2. Prayer of Approach.....	R7
3. Readings from Scripture.....	R8
4. Prayers of Assurance .....	R8
5. The Lord's Prayer.....	R10
6. The grace .....	R10

## Scripture sentences

I am the resurrection and the life.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

John 11:25-26

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

Psalms 46:1

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation,  
who consoles us in all our affliction.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4a

Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

Matthew 5:4

## Prayer of Approach

Eternal God,  
Lord of life and conqueror of death,  
our help in every time of trouble,  
comfort us who mourn;  
and give us grace, in the presence of death,  
to worship you, the ever-living,  
so that we may have sure hope of eternal life  
and be enabled to put our whole trust  
in your goodness and mercy:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Merciful God,  
you are our help in times of trouble,  
and the source of our consolation,  
to you we turn in times of sadness.  
Comfort and strengthen us  
by the power of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may trust in your promise of eternal life  
and know your goodness and mercy:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

God, our strength and our hope,  
our hearts cry out to you in our grief.  
In Christ you wept at the grave of a friend,  
hold us now in our weeping.  
In Christ you healed those who came to you in their need,  
touch us now to heal our pain.  
In Christ you gave your life for us and conquered death,  
comfort us now with your words of eternal life.

In our believing and in our doubting,  
may we know you as the God of all love and compassion:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Readings from Scripture

### Prayer of Assurance

Loving God,  
Lord of life and death,  
we praise you that all people are made in your image  
and held under your care;

we praise you that we are made to need each other's love  
and so reflect your truth and life.

We thank you for the life of ... N ... ,  
for the love and mercy *they* received from you  
and gave to us.

Above all we rejoice  
in the gift of your love in Jesus Christ.

Give us the confidence to believe  
that as Jesus has conquered death,  
nothing can separate us from your love.

We ask that we may at the last share with ... N ...  
the completeness of your eternal kingdom,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

Almighty God,  
Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort,  
deal graciously, we pray,  
with those who mourn,  
that, casting all their care on you,  
they may know the consolation of your love:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*or*

God of the living and the dead,  
trusting that your compassion bears all our burdens  
and gives us strength beyond ourselves,  
we place this day before you.  
We prepare now to give thanks  
for the life of ... N ... whom we have loved  
and to commend *them* to your sure keeping.

May we know your gifts of grace:  
hope for our sorrow,  
light for our darkness,  
peace for our troubled hearts,  
faith for our future.  
In the name of Jesus we pray.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

### The grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all evermore.

*All* **Amen.**

# A service of witness to the resurrection

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1. Scripture sentences .....	R12
2. Preface .....	R13
3. Hymn or song .....	R13
4. Prayers of Approach and Confession .....	R14
5. Readings from Scripture .....	R16
6. Sermon on the Christian hope .....	R16
7. Hymn or song .....	R16
8. Thanksgiving for the victory of Christ .....	R16
9. Thanksgiving for the life of the departed .....	R17
10. Prayers of petition and Intercession .....	R17
11. The Lord's Prayer .....	R18
12. Hymn or song .....	R18
13. Commendation .....	R18
14. Blessing .....	R19

## Committal

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15. Scripture sentences .....	R20
16. Words of committal .....	R21
17. The Lord's Prayer .....	R21
18. Prayer .....	R21
19. Dismissal and blessing .....	R22

## Scripture sentences

The Minister may lead the funeral procession into church saying:

I am the resurrection and the life.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

John 11:25-26

The eternal God is your dwelling place,  
and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Deuteronomy 33:27a (RSV)

No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life.  
As I was with Moses, so I will be with you;

I will not fail you or forsake you.

Joshua 1:5

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalms 27:1

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;

he will never permit the righteous to be moved. Psalms 55:22

He will feed his flock like a shepherd;

he will gather the lambs in his arms.

Isaiah 40:11a

Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

Matthew 5:4

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him

may not perish but may have eternal life.

John 3:16

Do you not know that  
all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus  
were baptised into his death?  
Therefore we have been buried with him  
by baptism into death,  
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
so we too might walk in newness of life.  
For if we have been united with him in a death like his,  
we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:3-5

## **Preface**

We have come together to worship God;  
to give thanks and praise for the life of ... N ... ,  
whose days among us here have drawn to a close.  
We are here to share our grief  
for one loved and respected by those who knew *them*,  
and one whose own love and concern have,  
through the years, strengthened others.  
We are here to pray for the comfort and strength  
that God promises us  
and to affirm the Christian conviction that,  
while death is the end of human life,  
it marks a new beginning in our relationship with God.

## **Hymn or song**

## Prayers of Approach and Confession

Eternal God,  
the creator and upholder of all things,  
your ways are not our ways,  
nor your thoughts our thoughts;  
your wisdom is unsearchable;  
your purposes cannot fail.  
Humbly we worship you,  
and as trusting children we come to you.  
Let not our hearts be troubled,  
neither let them be afraid.  
Comfort us in the natural grief of parting,  
and help us bear ourselves as Christian people,  
for whom death itself is swallowed up in victory;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

*All* **Amen.**

or

God of comfort and compassion,  
we come seeking the faith to trust that ... N ... is with you.  
We come seeking the peace you promise to us.  
We come to open our hearts to you.  
In the pain of grieving,  
may your strong love hold us.  
In the joy of treasured memories,  
may your peace comfort us.  
In the love and support of family and friends,  
may your grace keep us.  
Grant us strength for today and hope for tomorrow  
as we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

*All* **Amen.**

or

God who gave us birth,  
you are ever more ready to hear than we are to pray.  
You know our needs before we ask,  
and our ignorance in asking.  
Show us now your grace,  
that as we face the mystery of death  
we may see the light of eternity.  
Speak to us once more  
your joyful message of life and of death overcome.  
Help us to live as those who are prepared to die,  
and when our days here are ended,  
enable us to die as those who go forth and live,  
so that living or dying  
our life may be in Jesus Christ our risen Saviour.

*All* **Amen.**

God of compassion and grace,  
faced now with the reality of death, sorrow and sin,  
grieving and guilt intertwine.  
In our frailty we confess  
the regrets we can do nothing to change  
and the unfulfilled hopes of what might have been.  
We ask you to heal our hurt with pardon and love.  
In the mystery and mercy of your eternal love  
from which nothing in life or death can ever separate us,  
may our freedom, hope and peace be in Christ Jesus.

*All* **Amen.**

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:  
'Your sins are forgiven.' Thanks be to God.

*All* **Amen.**

## Readings from Scripture

Loving God,  
we turn to you now, and to your Word,  
so that we may renew our trust and our hope,  
and be lifted from darkness and distress  
into the light and peace of your presence,  
through Jesus Christ, the Living Word.

or

In scripture we read:

‘Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.’

John 6:68

## Sermon on the Christian hope

### Hymn or song

## Thanksgiving for the victory of Christ

Almighty and everlasting God,  
we thank you that you sent your Son Jesus Christ  
to die for us and rise again.  
His cross declares your love to be without limit;  
his resurrection that death, our last enemy, is doomed.  
By his victory we are assured of the promise  
that you will never leave us or forsake us;  
that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things  
to come,  
can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All

**Amen.**

## Thanksgiving for the life of the departed

Eternal God,  
before whose face the generations rise and pass away;  
we praise you for all your servants  
departed this life in your faith and love,  
especially for ... N ... ,  
each of us recalling, in a moment of silence,  
what *they* have meant  
to *their* loved ones, friends and colleagues....  
We give thanks for all your goodness towards *them*;  
all *they* accomplished by your grace;  
and all that *they* were to those who loved *them*.  
And now we praise you that for *them*  
sorrow and sickness are ended,  
death itself is past,  
and *they* live for ever in your love and care;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Prayers of petition and Intercession

God of all compassion,  
We bring to you all who mourn ... N ... now,  
especially those whose loss is deepest,  
whose need is greatest ...  
(*mourners may be named*).

May they cling to your firm promises  
and know the strength and comfort of your love.  
May they find beyond their tears  
the light of your eternity,  
and receive from your treasure-store  
gifts beyond human giving; peace, hope, joy and faith,  
gifts for their grieving and gifts for their future.

Through the bonds of family and friendships  
may we be channels of your grace.

We pray through Jesus Christ your Son and our Saviour  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

### Hymn or song

### Commendation

Holy God,  
by your mighty power you gave us life,  
and in your love you have given us new life in Jesus Christ.  
We now entrust ... N ... to your merciful keeping:  
in the faith of Christ Jesus, your Son our Lord,  
who died and rose again to save us,  
and is now alive and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit in glory for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

*All* Rest eternal grant to *them*, O Lord,  
**and let light perpetual shine upon *them*.**

or

*All* May *they* rest in peace  
**and rise in glory.**

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling,  
and to make you stand without blemish  
in the presence of his glory with rejoicing,  
to the only God our Saviour,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
be glory, majesty, power, and authority,  
before all time and now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

Jude: 24-25

## Blessing

The peace of God,  
which is beyond all understanding,  
guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

And the blessing of God our Creator,  
Christ, our Saviour,  
and the Holy Spirit, our Comforter,  
be with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

*or*

The blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with you,  
now and evermore.

*All* **Amen.**

*or*

*All* **The grace**

The funeral party may proceed from the church to the place  
of committal.

# Committal

---

## Scripture sentences

Come to me,  
all you that are weary  
and are carrying heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

So you have pain now;  
but I will see you again,  
and your hearts will rejoice,  
and no one will take your joy from you.

John 16:22

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,  
nor angels, nor rulers,  
nor things present, nor things to come,  
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us  
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,  
the first fruits of those who have died.  
So it is with the resurrection of the dead.  
What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.  
It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.  
It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

1 Corinthians 15:20, 42-43

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
By his great mercy he has given us  
a new birth into a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;  
the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;  
for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their  
shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:16-17

## Words of committal

In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life,  
through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we commend to almighty God our *brother/sister* ... N ... ,  
and commit *their* mortal body *to the ground/to the elements:*  
(*earth to earth,*) ashes to ashes, dust to dust,  
trusting in the infinite mercy of God  
and the victory of Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

Rest eternal grant to *them*, O Lord,  
*All* **and let light perpetual shine upon *them*.**  
**Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

### Prayer

Almighty God,  
you have bound together all your people  
in heaven and on earth  
in one holy fellowship:  
let not our thoughts linger here,  
but help us to believe  
that your servant's life has made a new beginning,  
with your mercy and your love still around *them*.

Strengthened by this assurance,  
may we return to the duties which await us in the world,  
resolved to be more faithful to you  
and more helpful to one another,  
for the sake of those no longer with us upon earth;  
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

*All* **Amen.**

## Dismissal and blessing

May the God of hope  
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope  
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Go in the peace of Christ.  
And the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
be with you now and always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Services for a Funeral – Two

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## A service of committal

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When the committal precedes the service of thanksgiving and release.

1. Scripture sentence .....	S2
2. Words of introduction .....	S2
3. Readings from Scripture.....	S2
4. Prayers .....	S3
5. Words of committal.....	S3
6. Affirmation of faith .....	S3
7. Prayers .....	S4
8. The grace .....	S4

Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

The Minister greets the mourners at the cemetery or crematorium and leads them into the chapel or to the graveside.

## **Scripture sentence**

Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.'

John 11:25-26

## **Words of introduction**

We have come together in the name of Jesus Christ,  
our risen and ascended Lord.

Through him God has given us new birth into a living hope,  
which nothing can destroy, or spoil, or wither.

We come to commit our beloved ... N ... into God's hands  
where *they* will be safe and complete for ever.

We come to seek strength from God  
to face the unknown future  
without ... N ... 's presence and support.

We come to find a place of quiet calm,  
in which we may express private grief  
before facing in public  
the wider world of ... N ... 's circle of family,  
friends, and acquaintances.

Let us hear from the Scriptures the promises of God,  
and receive their comfort.

## **Readings from Scripture**

## Prayers and Lord's Prayer

Let us thank God for ... N ... 's life,  
as we recall how much *they* meant to us;

let us commit ... N ... to God's sure keeping;

let us offer our grief to God  
and ask for God's comfort in our sorrow;

let us remember others who also mourn loved ones today;

let us pray for grace and strength  
to reach out to others in their need;

may we so live that we may not be afraid to die.  
Lord, in your mercy,  
hear our prayers.

Let us gather up our prayers in the words which Jesus  
taught us:

**All Our Father ...**

### Words of committal

Now that the earthly life of ... N ... has come to an end,  
we commit *their* mortal body to *the ground/the elements*,  
(*earth to earth*), ashes to ashes, dust to dust,  
trusting in the infinite mercy of God,  
creator of all things, visible and invisible,  
and the victory over death of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
To God be glory for ever.

### Affirmation of faith

God will swallow up death for ever.  
Then the Lord God will wipe away  
the tears from all faces.

It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him,  
so that he might save us.  
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Isaiah 25:8a, 9

## Prayer

Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in every generation.  
From everlasting to everlasting you are God.  
You stand beside us  
in every experience of joy or sorrow,  
happiness or desolation.

As we walk through death's dark valley,  
help us to trust in your steadfast love  
until the day dawns,  
the morning stars sing together,  
and the whole creation shouts your praise;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## The grace

*This may be said by everyone.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, evermore.

*All* **Amen.**

# A service of Thanksgiving and release

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1. Call to worship .....	S6
2. Hymn or song .....	S6
<b>Approaching the mystery .....</b>	<b>S7</b>
3. Words of introduction.....	S7
4. Prayer .....	S8
<b>Celebrating hope .....</b>	<b>S9</b>
5. Readings from Scripture.....	S9
6. Sermon on Christian hope.....	S9
7. Hymn or song .....	S9
<b>Remembering with Thanksgiving .....</b>	<b>S10</b>
8. Lighting of Thanksgiving candles .....	S10
9. Tribute.....	S10
10. Prayers of Thanksgiving .....	S10
11. Hymn or song .....	S11
<b>Releasing in hope.....</b>	<b>S12</b>
12. The commendation.....	S12
13. The Lord's Prayer .....	S13
14. Blessing .....	S13

If the service precedes the committal the Minister meets the coffin and the mourners at the entrance to the church or chapel. The following sentences may be read during the entry or when all have taken their places.

## **Call to worship**

Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124:8

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

For everything there is a season,  
and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance.

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2a, 4b

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matthew 5:4

The souls of the righteous are in God's hands;  
no torment will touch them. They are at peace.

Wisdom 3:1, 3b

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
By his great mercy God has given us  
a new birth into a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,  
and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled  
and unfading.

1 Peter 1:3-4b

## **Hymn or song**

# Approaching the mystery

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## Words of introduction

---

We have come together because ... N ... has died  
and the life we shared with *them* has come to an end.  
This is a time of parting, loss and sadness.

All of us who knew ... N ... had a unique relationship with *them*.  
Death does not bring to an end *their* influence  
nor the love and respect  
in which *they* were held during *their* life.  
They will continue to be powerful  
for as long as *they* are remembered.

... N ... was made in the image of God  
(*and was baptised into the Christian family of faith.*<sup>1</sup>)  
Every moment of *their* life *they*  
were a dearly loved child of God.  
*Their* death does not alter God's love for *them*.  
*They* bear God's name  
and is lovely in the eyes of God who created *them*.

At the heart of death there is mystery.  
There is much we cannot know or understand.  
Death marks for every person the boundary  
between the life God gives in this world  
and the new life God gives beyond death.  
We stand on this boundary,  
not knowing what lies beyond our seeing,  
our hearing or our imagining.  
Yet by faith we grasp God's promise,  
declared in the resurrection of Jesus,  
that we shall not die into oblivion but shall all be changed.

Even in sorrow,  
we are empowered by the Holy Spirit  
working in our hearts to say  
'Thanks be to God who gives us the victory  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

<sup>1</sup> The words in italics should be omitted where baptism has not taken place.

## Prayer

Creator God,  
Lord of life and conqueror of death,  
our hearts are grieving because ... N ... , whom we love,  
has died.

*Their* death reminds us that our lives are brief  
and will one day come to an end.

As we stand on the boundary between life and death,  
we praise you for your precious gift of life,  
for giving ... N ... to be with us,  
and for the journey which we have shared  
with *them* on earth.

Help us to release *them* as *they* journey on,  
confident that death is not an abyss of destruction  
but a crossing over into new and richer experiences  
of your love and grace.

In the midst of our grief and loss,  
give us the peace of Christ,  
who passed through the deep waters of death for us all,  
and by your power was raised to glorious life.  
Lord, hear our prayer.

*All* **Amen.**

# Celebrating hope

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## Readings from Scripture

In times of loss,  
God's people have always drawn strength  
from the promises of God in the Bible.  
Let us now listen for God's word of life  
as the Scriptures are read to us.

The prayer verse 'Nothing in all creation' (*Rejoice and Sing* 397) may be sung between each reading.

## Sermon on Christian hope

## Hymn or song

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# Remembering with Thanksgiving

## Lighting of Thanksgiving candles

The Minister or another representative person may light a central thanksgiving candle, saying:

‘I light this candle in thanksgiving for ... N ... as ... ‘

Members of the family, church members, representatives of the community, work colleagues or friends may also light candles. At the end the Minister may say:

Thanks be to God for the light which ... N ... has brought into our lives.

## Tribute

A tribute may be given.

## Prayers of Thanksgiving

Eternal God,  
we thank you for the light  
that has come into the world  
through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and for his promise that whoever follows him  
will have the light of life.  
Hear us as we remember and give thanks for ... N ...  
and for everything *they* meant to us.

### Silent prayer

Thank you for giving *them* to us,  
for everything *they* achieved  
by your grace during *their* life,  
for the gracefulness, warmth and tenderness  
which *they* embodied.  
Thank you for ...

## Silent prayer

Eternal God,  
giver of life and conqueror of death,  
we praise you that for ... N ...  
all suffering and sorrow are ended,  
death itself is past,  
and *they* live for ever in your love and care.  
In the midst of our sorrow  
we boldly affirm our faith  
that there is nothing in all creation  
that can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We pray for those among us whose loss is greatest,  
especially ... A ... and ... B ... and ... C ... .  
We remember those who lovingly cared for ... N ...  
and ministered to *their* needs.  
Give courage to all who mourn.  
Comfort them when their pain seems unrelenting  
and no light shines in their darkness.  
Help us as a community to offer support and comfort,  
to know when to speak and when to be silent.

## Silent prayer

Lord, remembering ... N ... with gratitude,  
and celebrating *their* life and deeds,  
we also give thanks for all whom we love  
who have passed from our sight  
into the joy of your heavenly kingdom.  
Keep us united in one holy and joyful fellowship  
until, at the last, all shall be gathered up in Christ,  
and the whole universe shall praise your name;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

**Hymn or song**

# Releasing in hope

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## The commendation

The congregation is invited to stand.

Surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses  
who have died in the faith of Christ,  
and with whom we lift up our hearts to God,  
we now commend ... N ...  
to God's eternal care and keeping.

Let us find wisdom, safety and delight  
within the communion of saints.

Let us know that those we love are not lost,  
but remain with us in the same family,  
led by the same Spirit,  
and sustained by the same faith.  
Let us rejoice in Jesus our Lord,  
who died in weakness,  
but was raised by the power of God  
to whom be glory and praise, for ever and ever.

God of peace,  
you brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,  
the great shepherd of the sheep,  
by the blood of the eternal covenant.  
Show us the peace we should seek,  
show us the peace we must try to give,  
show us the peace we may keep,  
show us the peace you have given,  
and make us what you want us to be:  
through Jesus Christ,  
to whom be glory for ever and ever.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Deep peace of the running wave to you,  
deep peace of the flowing air to you,  
deep peace of the quiet earth to you,  
deep peace of the shining stars to you,  
deep peace of the gentle night to you,  
moon and stars put their healing light on you,  
deep peace of Christ the light of the world to you.

## The Lord's Prayer

If the committal is to take place elsewhere, this part of the service concludes with the blessing. If the whole service takes place in the crematorium chapel the committal follows.

## Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

# Committal

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When the committal follows the service of thanksgiving and release.

1. Scripture sentences.....	S14
2. Words of committal.....	S15
3. Prayers .....	S16
4. Ascription of glory.....	S16
5. Blessing.....	S17

# Committal

---

When all have gathered at the graveside or crematorium the Minister says:

## Scripture sentences

The Word became flesh and lived among us,  
and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,  
full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

We are not our own.  
Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit  
and through them we glorify God.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

## Words of committal

... N ... 's body has been a temple of God's Spirit,  
through which *they* have served God  
and given support and comfort to those whom they loved.  
We now commit *their* mortal body  
to *the elements/to the ground*,  
trusting that by the power of God  
this perishable body will be clothed with the imperishable,  
and death will be swallowed up in victory;  
through Jesus Christ,  
our risen and ascended Lord,  
to whom be glory for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this:  
Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.'  
'Yes', says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labours,  
for their deeds follow them.'

Revelation 14:13

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed,  
we have a building from God, a house not made with hands,  
eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:1

Merciful God,  
you have prepared for those who love you  
such good things as pass our understanding;  
pour into our hearts such love towards you,  
that we, loving you above all things,  
may obtain your promises,  
which exceed all we can desire;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

O Lord, support us by your grace  
through all the hours of life's day;  
until the shadows lengthen,  
the busy world is hushed,  
the fever of life is over,  
and the evening comes.  
Then, Lord, in your mercy,  
grant us safe lodging, a holy rest,  
and peace at the last;  
through Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Ascription of glory

Now to the One who is able to keep us from falling,  
and set us in the presence of his glory,  
jubilant and above reproach,  
to the only God our Saviour,  
be glory and majesty,  
power and authority,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
before all time, now, and for evermore.

Jude: 24-25 (adapted)

## Blessing

Go forth into the world in peace;  
be of good courage;  
hold fast that which is good;  
render to no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the faint-hearted;  
support the weak;  
help the afflicted;  
honour all people;  
love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The blessing of God be with you;  
the blessing of the Creator;  
the blessing of the Son;  
the blessing of the Spirit,  
now and always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Services for a Funeral – Three

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## A service of Thanksgiving for one who has died

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to be preceded or followed by the committal

1. Opening words .....	T2
2. Scripture sentences .....	T2
3. Hymn or song .....	T2
4. Opening prayers .....	T2
5. Tributes from family and friends .....	T4
6. Readings from Scripture (and other appropriate sources) .....	T4
7. Sermon .....	T4
8. Hymn or song .....	T4
9. Prayers .....	T4
10. Words of commendation .....	T6
11. Hymn or song .....	T6
12. Blessing .....	T6

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## Opening words

We are here today  
because ... N ... has died.

We are here to remember *them* before God  
and to give thanks for *their* life.

We are here to express our sorrow,  
the grief which hurts because we loved *them*.

We are here to listen to words from the Bible  
and in them to find comfort and hope.

## Scripture sentences

St Paul says;  
as it is written,  
‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the human heart conceived,  
... God has prepared for those who love him.’

1 Corinthians 2:9

## Hymn or song

## Opening prayers

God our Creator,  
you made all the rhythms and patterns of creation,  
and just as you give us birth  
so you are there when death comes.  
You have made us mortal beings,  
of frail flesh and gentle spirit  
and you give us a span of life,  
a time to be born and a time to die.  
Today we see the value of life  
and are glad that it may be lived  
within the knowledge of your eternity.

Loving God,  
you comfort those who mourn.  
We come before you  
believing you share our love for ... N ...  
and know our sense of loss at *their* death.

Assure us of your love  
and support us with your strength,  
today and in the days to come.  
Even as we feel lost and sorrowful  
hold us in your strong embrace.  
Whenever sadness and regret fill us,  
have mercy upon us and bring us your peace.  
When we are cast down or low in spirit,  
keep us safe in your love  
awaiting the day when we will know again  
the possibility of joy.

God of all creation,  
Jesus, the risen one,  
Spirit bringing hope and new life,  
God the Holy Trinity,  
we give you praise and claim your comforting love  
this day and always,

**All**    **Amen.**

We pray in the name of Jesus  
who taught us to pray together the Lord's Prayer.

**All**    **Our Father ...**

## Tributes from family and friends

Members of the family, or friends, may speak about the life of the one who has died.

## Readings from Scripture (and other appropriate sources)

### Sermon

### Hymn or song

### Prayers

God, source of all life,  
mysterious, profound, generous in love,  
we give thanks because we have seen you in ... N ... .  
We give thanks for *their* life;  
for all that *they* were,  
and for all that *they* gave of *themselves*  
to *their* family, to friends,  
to the community of faith in the Church,  
to the world of work  
and to the wider community.  
We thank you for ...

We give thanks  
for what *they* were to each one of us.

We give thanks that *they* were such a person  
that we are moved to grief and sorrow by *their* loss.  
Help us, through *their* death,

to see more clearly the significance of life  
and to grasp more firmly the hope  
that we are more than our years  
and that love is stronger than death.

We pray for ourselves,  
disturbed by the great mystery of death,  
facing the questions it raises and the loss it brings.  
We pray that we will not be overwhelmed,  
but may face honestly what confronts us,  
so that we may sorrow freely  
and turn to life again  
with courage and with hope.

As we honour ... N ...  
we commit ourselves to care for each other,  
to bring hope to the despairing,  
and joy to those who sorrow. God,  
be with us here this day  
and in all the days to come.  
May we live as those who remember the past  
and who have hope for the future

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ  
our Lord and our Redeemer.

*All* **Amen.**

The congregation may be asked to stand

## Words of commendation

O God, who gives us life  
and in whose arms we die,  
we entrust ... N ...  
to your safe keeping  
in the faith of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.  
Receive one of your own,  
one in whom you have been at work,  
who carries with *them* our love.

Welcome *them* into your presence,  
into the rest of everlasting peace  
and into the company of all the saints.

Living God,  
in the mystery of your eternity,  
we are not separated from ...  
for your love holds us together.  
While we live *they* will not be forgotten among us.  
In your eternal love, *they* will never be lost.  
May our memories of *them* enrich our lives.  
May the good things of *their* life leave a trace on earth.  
May your keeping of *them* glorify heaven.

*All* **Amen.**

## Hymn or song

## Blessing

The blessing of God be with you;  
the blessing of the Creator,  
the blessing of the Son,  
the blessing of the Spirit,  
now and always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Interment or scattering of ashes

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1. Scripture sentences .....	U2
2. Prayer.....	U2
3. The Lord's Prayer.....	U3
4. Scripture reading.....	U3
5. Silence for reflection.....	U3
6. Interment or scattering .....	U3
7. Prayer.....	U4
8. Blessing .....	U4

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## Scripture sentences

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. Peter 1:3-4

## Prayer

Eternal God,  
Creator of life and conqueror of death,  
we are in your presence now  
and this is a holy place.  
Jesus Christ, who lived among us and died for us,  
you stand beside us in every sorrow.  
Holy Spirit, you are always with us,  
to comfort us and to give us strength.  
We come to you now,  
that we may know your presence with us in this place,  
and on this day.

We thank you for your promise  
that in your safe keeping  
the saints find peace for ever.  
Though they are no longer with us here,  
they are with you,  
sheltered by your eternal love.

We praise you for the gifts of life,  
for love and tenderness,  
wisdom and affection  
and all that makes life good and holy.  
We praise you for ... N ...  
whom we have loved  
and who will be remembered among us.

We praise you for the gift of new life,  
for the promise of resurrection  
and your assurance that the future is in your hands.

Be with us now  
as we honour one whom we loved.  
Confirm in us the hope of the Gospel.  
and help us to put our trust  
in your mercy and love,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

## Scripture reading

## Silence for reflection

## Interment or scattering

We have commended ... N ... to God's eternal love,  
and committed *their* body to be cremated.

We now inter *their* ashes in this ground  
(scatter *their* ashes in this place),  
in sure and certain hope  
of the resurrection to eternal life  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

In the earth, we give *them* a final place to rest.

In our memories, we will not forget *them*.

In the eternal love and mercy of God, *they* will be at peace.

## Prayer

Eternal God,  
who unites as one  
the people on earth  
and the company of heaven,  
may we know and rejoice  
that we are within your community of saints,  
both the living and the dead.

May we praise you with our lives  
as the angels praise you in heaven.  
Cheer us with the hope of your eternal life,  
support us with the knowledge of your love  
and bring us at the last to see you in glory,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Blessing

The peace of God  
which is beyond all understanding,  
guard your hearts and your thoughts in Jesus Christ.  
And the blessing of God,  
Creator, Christ and Comforter, (*Father, Son and Holy Spirit*)  
be with you, now and always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Readings for Funeral services

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## **Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures)**

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### ***Job 14:1-2, 5***

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‘A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble,  
comes up like a flower and withers,  
flees like a shadow and does not last.

Since their days are determined,  
and the number of their months is known to you,  
and you have appointed the bounds that they cannot pass.’

### ***Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11a***

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For everything there is a season,  
and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones,  
and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.  
God has made everything suitable for its time.

## **Isaiah 25:1, 6-9**

O Lord, you are my God;  
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;  
for you have done wonderful things,  
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines  
strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all  
the earth,

for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him,  
so that he might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

## **Isaiah 40:6-10, 28-31**

A voice says, 'Cry out!'

And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All people are grass,

their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades,

when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;

surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades;

but the word of our God will stand forever.  
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
'Here is your God!'  
See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

### **Isaiah 46:3-4**

Listen to me, O house of Jacob,  
all the remnant of the house of Israel,  
who have been borne by me from your birth,  
carried from the womb;  
even to your old age I am he,  
even when you turn grey I will carry you.  
I have made, and I will bear;  
I will carry and will save.

## **Lamentations 3:17-26**

My soul is bereft of peace;  
I have forgotten what happiness is;  
so I say, 'Gone is my glory,  
and all that I had hoped for from the Lord.'  
The thought of my affliction and my homelessness  
is wormwood and gall!  
My soul continually thinks of it  
and is bowed down within me.  
But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,  
'therefore I will hope in him.'  
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul that seeks him.  
It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord.

## **Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—  
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.

## **Psalm 90**

Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.  
You turn us back to dust,  
and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.'  
For a thousand years in your sight  
are like yesterday when it is past,  
or like a watch in the night.  
You sweep them away; they are like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning;  
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers.  
For we are consumed by your anger;  
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.  
You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.  
For all our days pass away under your wrath;  
our years come to an end like a sigh.  
The days of our life are seventy years,  
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;  
even then their span is only toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Who considers the power of your anger?  
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.  
So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain a wise heart.  
Turn, O Lord! How long?  
Have compassion on your servants!  
Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.  
Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,  
and as many years as we have seen evil.  
Let your work be manifest to your servants,  
and your glorious power to their children.  
Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and prosper for us the work of our hands—  
O prosper the work of our hands!

### **Psalm 103:1-18**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and do not forget all his benefits—  
who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the Pit,  
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,  
who satisfies you with good as long as you live  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.  
The Lord works vindication  
and justice for all who are oppressed.  
He made known his ways to Moses,  
his acts to the people of Israel.

The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
He will not always accuse,  
nor will he keep his anger for ever.  
He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far he removes our transgressions from us.  
As a father has compassion for his children,  
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.  
For he knows how we were made;  
he remembers that we are dust.  
As for mortals, their days are like grass;  
they flourish like a flower of the field;  
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,  
and its place knows it no more.  
But the steadfast love of the Lord  
is from everlasting to everlasting  
on those who fear him,  
and his righteousness to children's children,  
to those who keep his covenant  
and remember to do his commandments.

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## **Psalm 121**

I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The Lord is your keeper;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.  
The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
The Lord will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and forevermore.

## **Psalm 122**

I was glad when they said to me,  
'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'  
Our feet are standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.  
Jerusalem—built as a city  
that is bound firmly together.  
To it the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the Lord,  
as was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.  
For there the thrones for judgment were set up,  
the thrones of the house of David.  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
'May they prosper who love you.'

Peace be within your walls,  
and security within your towers.’  
For the sake of my relatives and friends  
I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’  
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your good.

## ***Psalm 139***

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O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from far away.  
You search out my path and my lying down,  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
O Lord, you know it completely.  
You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is so high that I cannot attain it.  
Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.  
If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night,’  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.  
In your book were written  
all the days that were formed for me,  
when none of them as yet existed.  
How weighty to me are your thoughts,  
O God! How vast is the sum of them!  
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;  
I come to the end—I am still with you.

O that you would kill the wicked, O God,  
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—  
those who speak of you maliciously,  
and lift themselves up against you for evil!  
Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?  
I hate them with perfect hatred;  
I count them my enemies.  
Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my thoughts.  
See if there is any wicked way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

## **New Testament**

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### ***Matthew 5:1-12a***

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When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.’

### ***John 11:17-27***

---

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’

Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life.

'Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

### **John 14:2-6, 18-19, 27**

'In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.'

### **Romans 6:3-8**

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

### **Romans 8:15b-18, 28, 31-35, 37-39**

When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ— if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## **1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 51-58**

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'

'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

## **2 Corinthians 4:13-18**

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—'I believed, and so I spoke'—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

### **Revelation 21:1-7**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

‘See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.’

And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.’

### **Revelation 22:1-5**

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of

the river is the tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

## **APOCRYPHA**

### ***Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-8***

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,  
and no torment will ever touch them.

In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,  
and their departure was thought to be a disaster,  
and their going from us to be their destruction;  
but they are at peace.

For though in the sight of others they were punished,  
their hope is full of immortality.

Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,  
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;  
like gold in the furnace he tried them,  
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.

In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,  
and will run like sparks through the stubble.

They will govern nations and rule over peoples,  
and the Lord will reign over them forever.

# Ordinations, Inductions and Commissioning services

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The nature of the tradition to which the United Reformed Church belongs, and the heritage to which it lays claim, are clearly seen when we meet as a synod or local congregation to ordain a new Minister or Elder, to commission a Church Related Community Worker, an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher or Locally Recognised Worship Leader. As people commit themselves to service of the one Church, through ministry within the United Reformed Church, we celebrate both the patterns of service we have inherited from the past and the new traditions we are developing. These services may be opportunities for the wider Church to hear us proclaiming the faith we hold and hopefully to see us putting it into action.

At such services it is right that there are some words and acts which we always say or do and that all is conducted with

continuity and integrity. The Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church is therefore very important. For some services of ordination, induction and commissioning there are Schedules of the Basis of Union which have been agreed by the General Assembly. These contain the words of the promises which individuals are expected to make before entering on a new way of serving the church. The texts which follow include all the relevant Schedules, including any variations where there are different options. These parts of the texts must always be used, on every occasion, because they express the unity we share.

There is also, as is right for a Church which celebrates freedom and diversity, much space for creativity, individuality and local variety. As well as those words which we have agreed always

to use, there is still a great deal of material which is there as a suggestion or guide, and can readily be adapted or changed.

Selections of readings are offered as suggestions. There are many more possibilities and local situations with creative people will provoke new ideas and new prayers.

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book)

# Ordination and Induction of Elders

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Eldership has been, and remains, an essential feature of the United Reformed Church. Where people of our tradition have the joy of worshipping as part of a Local Ecumenical Partnership, not all the wording here will be appropriate for the induction of their local leaders, but the use of some of the key elements is encouraged.

This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here. **There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used and these are indicated (by the orange boxes).**

The ordination and induction of Elders should take place during Sunday worship in the local church where the Elders are to serve. The service should

normally be led by a Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Recognising that an Elder is part of the leadership of the whole Church as well as of the local congregation the explicit involvement of representatives from the wider Church is encouraged in the ordination and induction of Elders.

The Structure makes it clear Elders are normally ordained by the Minister, or in a vacancy the Interim Moderator. However, pastorates have evolved since the Structure was drafted, and it might be impossible for either the Minister or the Interim Moderator to conduct the ordination of Elders.

In naming the Minister and the Interim Moderator specifically, the Structure is establishing the principle that Elders are ordained by a representative of the wider Church, not just the local, and Ministers and Interim

Moderators are ordaining Elders in their capacity as members of the synod rather than their office in the local church. Therefore, in order of preference, the following may preside at the ordination of Elders: the Minister, a duly appointed Local Church Leader (themselves an ordained Elder), the Interim Moderator, another relevant synod office holder, such as the Synod Moderator, Training Officer, Mission Enabler, Pastoral Convener etc, provided that they themselves are either an ordained Minister or Elder, another URC Minister, an Assembly accredited Lay Preacher, with the agreement of a relevant synod office holder.

It is the custom of the United Reformed Church to lay hands on those who are ordained which signifies the invocation of the Holy Spirit that the person is equipped for their new ministry.

The worship should include the reading of Scripture and proclamation of the Word, and normally the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Section 5 should only be used when new Elders are to be ordained. When all the Elders have been previously ordained, Section 5 should be omitted and the other elements of the service used to induct them for renewed service.

1. Introduction .....	X3
2. Statement of purpose.....	X3
3. Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) .....	X4
4. Affirmations .....	X6
5. Ordination.....	X8
6. Induction.....	X8
7. Declaration of Ordination and/or Induction .....	X9
8. Renewal of commitment.....	X10
9. Communion Prayer for use at a service Ordaining and Inducting Elders .....	X11

## Introduction

Through baptism, members of the Church are called to serve God in the world and to proclaim the love of Christ by the way they live. There are a variety of ministries within the Church and, in the United Reformed Church, some are called to be elders, to share in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local church. Today, according to the decision of the Church Meeting, we are to ordain ... A ... (and ... B ... ) to the office of elder, and to induct them (with ... C ... and ... D ... ) to serve in this congregation.

## Statement of purpose

Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service. To equip them for this ministry he gives particular gifts, and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within the Church. Some are called to be Elders. Elders share in the leadership of the local church and the pastoral oversight of its members. In the Elders' Meeting they take counsel together for the whole congregation.

They are responsible for making provision for Christian worship and discipleship, for maintaining proper standards of membership, and for promoting witness and service to the community, encouraging mission and fostering the peace, unity, and welfare of the Church. It is their duty to arrange for the proper maintenance of church buildings, and to ensure the oversight of church finances. Some Elders represent the local church in the wider Councils of the Church, and by virtue of their membership of these Councils represent the whole Church to the local church.

Elders, being elected by the Church Meeting, are ordained to their office and inducted to serve for such period as the church which elects them determines. (Here in this congregation we induct Elders for a period of ... X ... years.) Their ordination and induction is an act of the Church. It is right at this time to share in the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church, and to identify ourselves with it.

## **Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church**

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This Statement (Basis of Union, Schedule D) is read in one of the approved forms such as the one below:

This Statement is to be read aloud in one of the two prescribed forms. **VERSION II** is printed here, however **VERSION I** may be used if preferred.

With the whole Christian Church  
the United Reformed Church believes in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**All** **The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.**

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

**All** **We acknowledge the gift and answer the call,  
giving thanks for the means of grace.**

The highest authority for what we believe and do  
is God's Word in the Bible,  
alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

*All* **We respond to this Word, whose servants we are with all God's people through the years.**

We accept with thanksgiving to God  
the witness to the catholic faith  
in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition  
by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ  
in which they stated the faith  
and sought to make its implications clear.

*All* **Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source,  
renewed for every generation.**

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union  
in which we give expression to our faith  
in forms which we believe  
contain the essential elements of the Church's life,  
both catholic and reformed;  
but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises,  
to change the Basis of Union  
and to make new statements of faith  
in ever new obedience to the living Christ.

*All* **Our crucified and risen Lord,  
who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.**

Held together in the Body of Christ  
through the freedom of the Spirit,  
we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts  
and uphold the rights of personal conviction.  
For the sake of faith and fellowship  
it shall be for the church to decide  
where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

*All* **We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love  
and grow together in the peace of Christ.**

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head.

Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

*All* **While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.**

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses, so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.

*All* **Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is: to God be eternal glory. Amen.**

## Affirmations

All may stand as the presiding minister asks those to be ordained and/or inducted to affirm their faith. (These are from Schedule B to the Basis of Union "Affirmations to be made by Elders at ordination and induction")

In the light of this Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church and the statement concerning the functions of the eldership, the Elders-elect are now asked to answer the following questions:

Do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

**I do.**

In dependence on God's grace do you reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and your promise to follow him and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of your life?

**I do.**

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

**I do.**

Do you accept the office of Elder of the United Reformed Church in this congregation, and do you promise to perform its duties faithfully?

**I do.**

Do you promise as an Elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

**By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The final question was added by the General Assembly in July 2021

## Ordination

This section is only used for those not previously ordained.

All those to be ordained Elders may kneel.

Thank you, God,  
for the various gifts which you give to your people,  
and for the varieties of ministry in the Church.  
Thank you for all *those* of faith and integrity who have  
served this local church.  
Thank you, now, for ... A ... (and ... B ... ).

The presiding minister, and appointed Elders lay hands on  
each person to be ordained, praying thus:

Empower *them* with your Holy Spirit,  
give *them* humility and grace,  
so that by *their* faithfulness,  
*they* may show your love to your people:  
in the name of *our Saviour* Jesus Christ.

**All** **Amen.**

In your name, and trusting it to be your will, we now ordain  
... A ... to be an Elder.

## Induction

The Minister asks the members of the church to accept the  
ministry of all the Elders named, both newly ordained and  
any previously ordained:

Will you encourage and support them,  
and respond to their ministry  
acknowledging that it comes to you from God?

**All** **We will**

Eternal God,  
you have called us all to serve you in the world  
and to share your love with each other and our neighbours.  
Through the decision of this local church  
you have called ... A ... ( ... B ... , ... C ... and ... D ... )  
to serve us as *an Elder/Elders*.  
Give *them* the promised blessings of your Holy Spirit  
and fill *them* with fresh vision and courage,  
to lead us in the work you have called us to do.  
Make *them* wise with the mind of Christ,  
and give *them* the gifts they need to fulfil this service faithfully;  
in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

## **Declaration of Ordination and/or Induction**

... A ... ( ... B ... , ... C ... and ... D ... ), in the name of  
Jesus Christ the only Head of the Church, and according to  
the decision of the Church Meeting,  
I declare you to be (*ordained and*) inducted to serve as *an  
Elder/Elders*, and welcome you into this office.

The Minister and other representatives of the Church may  
offer a sign of welcome. They may, for example, offer 'the  
right hand of fellowship'.

Paul wrote in Galatians 2:9;

'...when James and Cephas and John, who were  
acknowledged pillars, recognised the grace that had been  
given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand  
of fellowship.' So we, recognising the grace that is in you,  
shake your hand.

May the God of peace sanctify you entirely,  
and may your spirit, soul and body be kept sound  
and blameless.

The one who calls you is faithful, and will do this.

## Renewal of commitment

And now as Elders and members of this church and  
congregation, let us confirm our commitment to each other  
and to the gospel. Let us pursue what makes for peace and  
build each other up in love.

*All* **We will grow together in humility, gentleness and patience;  
we will nurture each other in faith;  
we will bear with one another in love;  
we will make every effort  
to maintain the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond  
of peace,  
so that we may faithfully proclaim the gospel of Christ.  
The God of peace will make us complete in everything  
good.  
To whom be glory for ever.**

May God's peace be with you.

*All* **And also with you.**

Eternal God, accept this commitment made in your presence,  
and give us grace to make it true,  
so that we may not fail you in the end,  
but give you glory and honour by the way we live  
and through everything we say and do,  
in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

The Lord's Supper normally follows, and the newly inducted  
Elders serve or are served together.

# **Communion Prayer for use at a service Ordaining and Inducting Elders**

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The newly ordained Elders may be invited to read  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

God is here!

*All* **God's Spirit is with us!**

Lift up your hearts

*All* **we lift them up to God!**

Let us give God our thanks and praise!

*All* **This is indeed our duty and joy!**

Eternal Majesty,

before the ages began you formed the heavens and the earth,  
the moon and the stars proclaim your glory,  
and all that was created sings your praise.

You make humanity in your own image,  
intending us to glorify and enjoy you forever.

Again and again, we turn away from your love,  
despite the guidance of your Law and the warnings of  
your prophets.

In the fullness of time, you emptied yourself of all but love and dwelt with us.

O Jesus, our Saviour,  
you proclaimed good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners,  
sight for the blind and liberation for the oppressed,  
but we preferred to turn away from freedom  
choosing the bondage of sin, and nailed you to the Cross.  
Yet you defeated the powers of death and evil  
and revealed a new life for all who follow you.

Before you were given over to the powers of your age,  
you shared in the simplicity of a meal with your friends,  
and, during that meal, you took bread, said the ancient  
blessing,  
broke the bread and gave it to your friends, saying

Take this all of you and eat it, for this is my body  
which is broken for you. Do this in memory of me.

When Supper was over, you took the cup of wine,  
again prayed the ancient prayer of blessing,  
gave the cup to your friends and said:

Take this all of you and drink from it,  
this is the cup of my blood,  
the blood of the new and everlasting covenant  
so that sins may be forgiven.  
Do this in memory of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of our faith:

**All Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Come, O Holy Spirit,  
on these gifts of bread and wine,  
that they may be, for us, the body and blood of Christ.  
Lift us into your presence that our faith may be renewed,  
our commitment to follow strengthened,  
and our understanding of Church deepened.

Bless those who serve this congregation as Elders,  
that through their Meetings the mind of Christ may be  
discerned,  
this congregation strengthened in its mission  
of worship and witness, evangelism and service,  
so that the bruised and broken find healing,  
the proud and mighty find humility,  
and the poor and lowly find their dignity.

Through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus,  
in the loving power of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are Yours, O Most High,  
forever and ever,

*All* **Amen!**

It is fitting for the newly ordained and inducted Elders to  
serve Communion.

Some suggested Scripture readings: Old Testament  
(Hebrew Scriptures):

Exodus 18:13-27, Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30, Isaiah 42:1-9,  
Ezekiel 34:11-16

## New Testament:

Matthew 25:14-28, Mark 10:35-45, John 21:15-17,  
Acts 20:28-35, Romans 12:1-18, 1 Corinthians 12:4-13,  
Ephesians 4:1-16, Philippians 2:1-11, 1 Peter 4:7-11,  
1 Peter 5:1-4.

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book)

# Ordination and Induction of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments

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This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here.

**There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used and these are indicated by the orange boxes.**

A meeting of the synod shall be constituted, at which the Synod Moderator (or a deputy) shall preside representing the synod. (The Structure Section B). The ordination shall normally be held in the pastorate to which the Minister of The Word and Sacraments is being inducted. If desired, the Lord's Supper may be celebrated.

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# Welcome and Call to Worship

Including one or more Scripture sentences, in simple or responsive form (suitable sentences include Ephesians 6:23-24; Revelation 1:4b; Colossians 1:15-16, 18a-b, 19a)

## Hymn or song

## Prayers of Approach

Beginning with praise:  
either

Sovereign God, you are neither made nor fashioned:

*All* **you are the Creator and source of life,  
perfect Saviour,  
Intercessor and giver of spiritual gifts.**

God of all grace, whose love for us is unconditional:

*All* **you are the Source and Guide and Goal of all that is;  
we stand in awe at your majesty and might.**

When we are in your holy presence,

*All* **our hearts are renewed with adoration, we praise you;  
our souls are renewed with lasting peace, we praise you;  
our minds are renewed with inspiration, we praise you;  
and our strength is renewed with hope, we praise you.**

or

We praise you, God, the Creator:

*All* **through your love and power all things came to be and  
continue in their being.**

We praise you, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh:

*All* **through your death and resurrection  
we are reconciled within God's family  
and born into a new and living hope.**

We praise you, Holy Spirit, the Giver of life:

*All* **through wind and fire the Church was born,  
and by your gifts the body of Christ is built up.**

With the whole Church on earth and in heaven we praise you:

*All* **one God for ever.  
Amen.**

or

For the wonders of creation and the beauty of this earth:

*All* **Creator God, we praise you.**

For your gift beyond words in Jesus Christ:

*All* **redeeming God, we praise you.**

For the call to follow and the grace to serve:

*All* **living God, we praise you.**

*Continuing with Confession:*

*either*

Almighty God, we have fractured your Church,  
we have wasted the resources of this earth,  
we have corrupted our culture.

*All* **Forgive us, we pray;  
renew us by the power of your Spirit  
to be loving and honest people of integrity.**

Merciful God, we have committed our hearts to walking  
with you daily

following the example of leadership and servanthood  
which we see in your Son Jesus Christ.

*All* **But we confess we have elevated our desires and plans  
over your will for our lives and your world.**

We chase after authority and power over others,  
to serve our own purposes.

*All* **Forgive us, and open our eyes,  
so that we might truly value ourselves and one another  
as your handiwork.  
Draw us close and bind us together in your mercy.**

or

Let us confess our sin: for our abuse of your creation:

*All* **Lord, forgive us;**  
for our divisions within the one body of Christ:

*All* **Lord, forgive us;**  
for our neglect of the gifts of the Spirit:

*All* **Lord, forgive us.**

or

Gracious God, you call us to be the body of Christ,  
yet we often fail in our vocation.

While Christ proclaimed truth, we obscure it.

Though Christ prayed for the unity of all, we remain divided.

While Christ touched the sick and blessed the poor,  
we shrink from the demands of justice.

Forgive us. Conform us to Christ.

May all that we do arise from our unity in him, and may his  
Spirit renew us,

so that the world might come to believe.

*All* **Amen.**

Continuing with assurance of forgiveness:

either

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...

1 Timothy 1:15

To all who turn to God, who take hold of the grace that has been revealed, this is Christ's gracious word:  
Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you.

Luke 7:48b, 50b

He also says: Come, follow me.

Luke 18.22b

or

In repentance and in faith hear the promise of grace and the assurance of pardon:

God resolved through Christ to reconcile to God's self all things, whether on earth or in heaven,  
by making peace through the blood of Christ's cross.

Colossians 1:20

Jesus says: Your sins are forgiven.

Mark 2:5b

He also says:

Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Follow me.

John 21:15b, 16b, 19b

Thanks be to God.

*All* **Amen.**

*A prayer for grace may be said, such as:*

Sovereign God, your grace shapes us, summons us, strengthens us.

Author of Creation, inscribe your law upon our hearts.

Word-made-flesh, touch our ears and open them to your instruction.

Divine Breath, stir within us with sighs too deep for words.

Take and transform us now:

that we may be your workers and witnesses

in every place to which you draw us.

*All* **Amen.**

or

God, the source of every perfect gift:  
in Jesus Christ you have given us your life to redeem us,  
your word for our wisdom,  
your grace for our guide.  
Enter and possess our hearts, to dwell with us always,  
one God, now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## Statement

The presiding Minister says:

We meet today as the ... X ... Synod of the United Reformed Church, in the company of members of ... YZ ... churches (representatives of ... ) ... and friends from far and wide.  
We welcome you all.

Christians share, through their baptism, in the ministry of Christ; and all Christians are called to be ministers of God's love. The life of faithful discipleship is cradled in worship, shaped in study of the Scriptures, and expressed in loving service in the Church and in the world. God gives a variety of gifts, from the same Spirit, to equip the Church for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

Continuing with either (at an Ordination and Induction):

In succession to the apostles and in company with all who follow in Christ's way,  
some are called to be Ministers of the Word and Sacraments;  
and it is to this ministry that we have come to ordain ... N ... ,  
and to induct *them* to serve in ...

or (at an Induction of a previously-ordained Minister of the Word and Sacraments):

In succession to the apostles and in company with all who follow in Christ's way, some are called to be Ministers of the Word and Sacraments; and it is within this ministry that we have come to induct ... N ... to serve in ...

## Readings from Scripture

The following readings are appropriate:

*Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):*

Exodus 33:12-14; Deuteronomy 30:11-20; 1 Kings 19:1-21; Nehemiah 8:1-12; Isaiah 6:1-8; 49:1-6; 52:7-10; 55:1-13; 61:1-4; Jeremiah 1:4-10.

*New Testament:*

Matthew 5:1-12; Mark 3:13-19; 6:30-44; 10:35-45; Luke 4:14-21; 10:1-11; John 13:1-17; 15:1-17; 21:15-19. Acts 20:17-38; Romans 10:5-15; 12:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; 2 Corinthians 4:1-15; Ephesians 3:8-21; 4:1-16; Philippians 2:1-16; 1 Peter 4:8-11; 5:1-4.

An appropriate response may be used before and/or after each reading, for example:

Let us listen for God's word to us today.

*All* **May our ears and our hearts be open.**

or

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

### Presentation of the Candidate

The Interim Moderator may present the candidate to the presiding Minister with these or similar words:

Moderator, I present to you ... N ... for [ordination and] induction.

At an Ordination with Induction:

... N ... was accepted as a candidate by the United Reformed Church,  
has been prepared for ordination by ... College,  
is commended for ordination by ... *their* sending Synod,  
and, through a process of prayerful discernment,  
has been called to serve here by decision of ... (church meeting/appointing body)  
[with the concurrence of ... ]

Or, at an Induction of a previously ordained Minister:

... N ... has previously served as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments  
at ... AB ... ,  
and, through a process of prayerful discernment,  
has been called to serve here by decision of ... (church meeting/appointing body)  
[with the concurrence of ... ]

## Narrative of the Call

One or more representatives of the congregation/s or appointing body makes a short statement outlining the steps which have led to this call.

## Statement by the candidate

The candidate makes a brief statement about their call to the particular ministry into which they will be inducted (and, in the case of an Ordinand, about their call to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments).

## Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC

(URC Basis of Union, Schedule D)

This Statement is to be read aloud in one of the two prescribed forms. **VERSION II** is printed here, however **VERSION I** may be used if preferred.

With the whole Christian Church  
the United Reformed Church believes in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*All* **The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.**

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

*All* **We acknowledge the gift and answer the call,  
giving thanks for the means of grace.**

The highest authority for what we believe and do  
is God's Word in the Bible,  
alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

*All* **We respond to this Word, whose servants we are  
with all God's people through the years.**

We accept with thanksgiving to God  
the witness to the catholic faith  
in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.  
We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition  
by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ  
in which they stated the faith  
and sought to make its implications clear.

*All* **Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source,  
renewed for every generation.**

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union  
in which we give expression to our faith  
in forms which we believe  
contain the essential elements of the Church's life,  
both catholic and reformed;  
but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises,  
to change the Basis of Union  
and to make new statements of faith  
in ever new obedience to the living Christ.

*All* **Our crucified and risen Lord,  
who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.**

Held together in the Body of Christ  
through the freedom of the Spirit,  
we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts  
and uphold the rights of personal conviction.  
For the sake of faith and fellowship  
it shall be for the church to decide  
where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

**All We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love and grow together in the peace of Christ.**

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head.

Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

**All While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.**

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses, so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.

**All Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is: to God be eternal glory. Amen.**

## **Affirmations**

(URC Basis of Union, Schedule C)

Using one of the two prescribed forms, both printed here.

### **VERSION I**

1. ... N ... , do you confess anew your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?  
**I do.**

2. Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

**I do.**

3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world?

Do you believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people?

And will you faithfully proclaim this Gospel?

**By the grace of God this I believe  
and this I will proclaim.**

4. Do you believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ?

**I do.**

5. Are zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world, so far as you know your own heart, the chief motives which lead you to enter this ministry?

**They are.**

6. Do you promise to live a holy life,  
and to maintain the truth of the gospel,  
whatever trouble or persecution may arise?

**Relying on the strength of Christ, I do.**

7. Do you promise to fulfil the duties of your charge\* faithfully,  
to lead the church in worship,  
to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments,  
to exercise pastoral care and oversight,  
to take your part in the councils of the Church,  
and to give leadership to the Church  
in its mission to the world?

**By the grace of God, I do.**

\* The presiding Minister (after appropriate consultation) may modify the wording of question 7 to fit the kind of ministry to which the candidate has been called.

8. Do you promise  
as a Minister of the United Reformed Church  
to seek its well-being, purity and peace,  
to cherish love towards all other churches  
and to endeavour always to build up  
the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

**By the grace of God, I do.**

9. Will you undertake to exercise your ministry  
in accordance with the Statement concerning  
the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church?

**I will, and all these things I profess and promise  
in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

or

## VERSION II

1. ... N ... , will you confess anew your faith?

**I confess anew my faith in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**I believe that the Word of God in the Old and  
New Testaments,  
discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,  
is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct  
of all God's people.**

**I believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary,  
lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross,  
and who was raised from the dead and reigns for  
evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world.**

**I believe that through him  
God's love, justice and mercy are revealed  
and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life  
are offered to all people.**

**And by the grace of God  
I promise to proclaim this gospel faithfully.  
I believe that the Church is the people gathered  
by God's love  
to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to  
God through Jesus Christ.**

2. What leads you to this ministry?

**So far as I know my own heart,  
I believe that zeal for the glory of God,  
love for the Lord Jesus Christ,  
obedience to the Holy Spirit  
and a desire for the salvation of the world,  
are the chief motives which lead me to enter  
this ministry.**

**Relying on the strength of Christ,  
I promise to live a holy life,  
and to maintain the truth of the gospel,  
whatever trouble or persecution may arise.**

3. Will you faithfully fulfil the duties of your charge? \*

**By the grace of God  
I promise to lead the Church in worship,  
to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments,  
to exercise pastoral care and oversight,  
to take my part in the councils of the Church,  
and to give leadership to the Church in mission  
to the world.**

**As a Minister of the United Reformed Church  
I promise to seek its well-being, purity, and peace,  
to cherish love towards all other churches,  
and to endeavour always to build up  
the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.**

**I undertake to exercise my ministry  
in accordance with the Statement concerning the  
Nature, Faith and Order  
of the United Reformed Church.**

**All these things I profess and promise in the  
power of the Holy Spirit.**

\* The presiding Minister (after appropriate consultation) may modify the wording of the answer to question 3 to fit the kind of ministry to which the candidate has been called.

## **Hymn of the Holy Spirit**

One possible hymn of the Holy Spirit is offered on page AA1.

(NOTE: At an Induction of a previously-ordained Minister of the Word and Sacraments, this hymn is instead used later in the service, after the congregational promises.)

## **Ordination Prayer**

(NOTE: At an Induction of a previously ordained Minister of the Word and Sacraments, this section is *omitted*.)

It is the custom of the United Reformed Church to lay hands on those who are ordained which signifies the invocation of the Holy Spirit that the person is equipped for their new ministry. The Ordinand may kneel, the congregation may stand, and the presiding Minister prays:

God of every perfect gift,  
we give you thanks that in every age you call your people  
to show forth your acts of mercy and love.  
We thank you for the many ways your summons comes to us;  
we thank you that as you call, so you equip;  
we thank you that, together, we and all your Church  
are brought to share in the ministry of Christ.

Thank you now, sovereign God, for ... N ... ,  
as in your name, and trusting it to be your will,  
we now ordain *them* as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments.

### The presiding Minister and those appointed lay hands on the Ordinand

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon your servant ... N ... ;  
that your gift within *them* may be fanned into a flame.  
Strengthen *them* in *their* work and witness;  
sustain *them* with calmness and confidence, with excitement  
and joy.

In every circumstance, whether in times of ease or in times  
of difficulty,  
enable *them* to stand firm in the truth of the gospel,  
and to conduct *themselves* always according to your holy will.  
In *their* preaching, may your Gospel of redemption be heard;  
in *their* presiding at baptistery, font and table, may your  
saving deeds be remembered;  
and may all *their* acts of service bear witness to your  
steadfast love.

So may ... N ... 's ministry enrich the whole Church;  
and may ... N ... , with all your Church, know the assurance  
now and always  
of your presence, your purpose, your power.

**All** Amen.

## Promises

The presiding Minister asks the congregation:  
either

Do you confess again your faith in one God, the Trinity of  
love – whose children we are, co-heirs with Christ, crowned  
with the Holy Spirit?

**All** We do.

or

Do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

*All* **We do.**

Continuing:

Do you receive ... N ... as from God, as a Minister of The Word and Sacraments of the United Reformed Church?

*All* **We do.**

Will you pray for ... N ... in this ministry, giving *them* due honour, support and encouragement?

*All* **We will.**

Continuing with a question addressed to those in particular who will receive the candidate's ministry; either, to members of the local church(es) where the Minister of The Word and Sacraments is to serve:

Members of ... , do you receive ... N ... as from God, to serve among you and to lead you in your ministry?

*All* **We do.**

or (in the case of induction to eg a chaplaincy, an ecumenical appointment, a synod post, or a General Assembly appointment) to members or representatives of the appointing body:

Members of ...., do you receive ... N ... as from God, to minister among you?

*All* **We do.**

According to circumstances, the presiding Minister may also invite representatives of other bodies, including for example ecumenical colleagues and/or members of an appropriate

area/grouping within the synod, to make a similar promise using suitable words.

## Hymn of the Holy Spirit

One possible hymn of the Holy Spirit is offered on page AA1.

(NOTE: At an Ordination and Induction, this hymn is instead used earlier in the service, after the Ordinand's affirmations.)

## Induction Prayer

The presiding Minister prays:

Eternal God, you have called and gathered us, with all your Church,  
to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed;  
and, in your Holy Spirit, we receive all the gifts we need.  
We give thanks, today, because you have called and set apart ... N ...  
to be a Minister of The Word and Sacraments in this place  
[or, in this pastorate].

As we receive and induct *them* in the name of Jesus Christ to serve you here,  
strengthen and encourage *them*, we pray,  
that the ministry and mission of your people may bear fruit.  
Inspire *them* in leading worship,  
in preaching and teaching and service;  
may the Gospel be celebrated when *they* preside at the sacraments.  
Nurture *them* with love and humility  
to tend your flock, to feed the hungry, heal the wounded,  
and find the lost.

Bless *them* with power and patience,  
to witness with all Christians to your way,  
and labour with all people of goodwill for justice and mercy  
in society.

Give *them* joy in *their* ministry,  
and the fulfilment of being rooted in your will.  
Watch over *them* in times of trial; in weariness,  
disappointment, or frustration;  
and keep *them* from complacency and spiritual pride.  
Fill *their* home with your peace.

(Special petitions may be added at this point)

Give grace to the people of this church [*or*, this pastorate;  
*or other suitable description*],  
that they may accept the service God offers them through  
... N ... .

May they work together in unity and joy for the glory of  
your name.

And may the good work you have begun today  
be brought to completion in Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you, God who brought us to birth,  
and with the Holy Spirit, the Breath of life:  
one eternal Trinity of love, now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## **Declaration of [Ordination and] Induction**

The presiding minister says:

In the name of Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church,  
and representing the ... X ... Synod of the United Reformed  
Church,

I declare ... N ...

[ to be ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments  
within the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and ]  
to be inducted to...

Continuing with a Scripture sentence, such as:

Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance,  
gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the  
eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made  
the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Timothy 6:11b-12

*All* **Amen.**

or

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let  
your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.  
Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer  
and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be  
made known to God. And the peace of God, which  
surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and  
minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

*All* **Amen.**

or

May the God of peace, who by the blood of the eternal  
covenant brought out from the dead our Lord Jesus, the  
great shepherd of the sheep, equip you fully in all that is  
good so that you may do God's will, working among us that  
which is well-pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ to whom  
be the glory for ever and ever.

Hebrews 13:20-21

*All* **Amen.**

or

Now to the One who can bring about, by the power at work within us, that which far surpasses all we can ask or imagine – to God be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, now and forever!

Ephesians 3:20-21

*All* **Amen.**

## Welcome

The newly inducted Minister of The Word and Sacraments is greeted by the presiding Minister and by others duly appointed, who may include representatives of the pastorate or appointing body, and of such local grouping or area of URCs as may exist within the synod, as well as by ecumenical, civic and community representatives.

## Giving of Gifts

The Minister of The Word and Sacraments may be presented with symbolic gifts, and appropriate words may be used; for example:

Receive this Bible,  
*All* **the word of God, living and active.**

Hebrews 4:12a

Receive this cup and plate,  
*All* **to hold bread and wine for the feeding of God's people.**

Receive this water,  
*All* **symbol of baptism and sign of new life.**

# Prayers of Intercession

These prayers may be spoken by different voices and may end with the Lord's Prayer.

## Hymn or song

## Dismissal and Blessing

Either

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

[ Live in harmony with one another;

do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;

do not claim to be wiser than you are.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil,

but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you,

live peaceably with all. ]

Romans 12:12-15 [-18]

or

Go into the world: dance, laugh, sing and create.

*All* **With the assurance of God's blessing, we go.**

Go into the world: risk, explore, discover, and love.

*All* **With the assurance of God's blessing, we go.**

Go into the world: believe, hope, struggle and remember.

*All* **With the assurance of God's blessing, we go.**

Go forth remembering who you are and to whom you belong.

*All* **Thanks be to God!**

**Amen.**

or

Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling,  
and to make you stand without blemish  
in the presence of divine glory with rejoicing,  
to the only God our Saviour,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
be glory, majesty, power and authority,  
before all time, now and for ever.

Jude:24-25

*All* **Amen.**

or

Go forth into the world in peace;  
be of good courage;  
hold fast that which is good;  
render to no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the fainthearted;  
support the weak;  
help the afflicted;  
honour everyone;  
love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Continuing with:**

(And) The blessing of God Almighty,  
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer  
[or, Author of all, and living Word, and Voice of love within]  
[or, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,]  
be with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

# Commissioning and Induction of Church Related Community Workers

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This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here. **There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used and these are indicated (by the orange boxes).**

A meeting of the synod shall be constituted, at which the Synod Moderator (or a deputy) shall preside representing the synod. (The Structure Section B). The Commissioning shall normally be held in the church-in-community where the Church Related Community Worker is to serve. It should be adapted to local circumstances, with opportunities for participation by those who will work with the Church Related Community Worker. If desired, the Lord's Supper may be celebrated after the prayers of intercession.

Welcome and Call to Worship.....	Z3
Hymn or song .....	Z3
Prayers of Approach .....	Z3
Statement .....	Z5
Readings from Scripture .....	Z6
Sermon .....	Z6
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Presentation of the candidate .....	Z6
Statement by the Church-in-Community.....	Z7
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**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

# Welcome and Call to Worship

including one or more Scripture sentences, in simple or responsive form (suitable sentences include Psalm 95:1-2; Psalm 100:5; Isaiah 65:19,23a,24; Jeremiah 29:7; Zechariah 8:3a,4a,5; Revelation 21:2a,3).

## Hymn or song

## Prayers of Approach

### Beginning with praise:

Loving God,  
whose love we live to serve,  
so that all the world may see the wonder of it:  
take hold of us again as we worship here,  
and give us the mind of Christ,  
so that we may rediscover your presence in the community  
around us,  
and recognise your Spirit at work in every act of human  
kindness,  
in every plea for justice,  
in every call to service,  
and in every challenge to our complacency.  
Take hold of us again,  
fill us with love for each other and our neighbours,  
and by our faithfulness,  
let your justice, joy and peace extend to more and more,  
so that the thanks and praise we offer now  
may increase, to your glory and our delight,  
now and for evermore.

*All* **Amen.**

## Continuing with Confession:

Faithful God,  
you called your Church into being  
to proclaim your integrity to the world,  
and to live in the truth of it.

*All* **Forgive our faithlessness,  
and make our witness true.**

Loving God,  
you called your Church into being  
to assure the world of your unfailing love  
and to live in the power of it.

*All* **Forgive our lovelessness,  
and give us grace to love our neighbours  
as you, in Christ, have loved us.**

God of justice,  
you called your Church into being  
to serve your cause,  
and to challenge prejudice and oppression.

*All* **Forgive our prejudice,  
and our hardness of heart;  
fill us with compassion and make us merciful.**

God of peace,  
you called your Church into being  
to teach the world the things that make for peace.

*All* **Forgive our enmity and bitterness,  
make us truly your children,  
faithful in our bearing of your image,  
and courageous in our peacemaking.**

Continuing with assurance of forgiveness:

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance:

**All that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.  
Thanks be to God who gives us the victory  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## Statement

The presiding Minister says:

We meet today as the ... X ... Synod of the United Reformed Church, with the members of ... Church-in-Community, representatives of ... and other friends.

All Christians are called to the duty and delight of continuing the ministry of Christ in the Church and for the world. Within this shared ministry, some are called in particular to the Ministry of Church Related Community Work: to pray and care for the community, to challenge both the community and the Church alike, to enable the proclamation in word and deed of God's love and mercy, and to help the Church to work with others for peace and justice.

Continuing with either (at a Commissioning and Induction):

It is to this ministry that we have come to commission ... N ... , and to induct them to serve here.

or (at an induction of a previously commissioned CRCW):

It is within this ministry that we have come to induct ... N ... to serve here.

## Readings from Scripture

The following readings are appropriate:

*Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):*

Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Psalm 15; Isaiah 58:1-12;

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Zechariah 8:1-8.

*New Testament:*

Matthew 5:1-16; Matthew 7:7-20; Matthew 19:16-30;

Mark 4:21-32; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 4:14-21; Luke 6:20-31;

Luke 14:7-14; John 4:5-15,21-30,39-42; Philippians 2:1-11;

Revelation 21:1-7.

## Sermon

## Hymn or song

## Presentation of the Candidate

An appropriate person may present the candidate to the presiding Minister with these or similar words:

Moderator, I present ... N ... to you, for [commissioning and] induction.

At a Commissioning with Induction:

... N ... was accepted by the United Reformed Church as a candidate for this ministry,  
has been prepared for commissioning by Northern College,  
is commended for commissioning by ... *their* sending Synod,  
and, through a process of prayerful discernment,  
has been called to serve here by decision of ...  
CRCW Covenant partners [with the concurrence of ... ]

Or, at an Induction of a previously commissioned CRCW:

... N ... previously served as a Church Related Community Worker in ... AB ... ,  
and, through a process of prayerful discernment,  
has been called to serve here by decision of ...  
CRCW Covenant partners [with the concurrence of ... ]

## **Statement by the Church-in-Community**

A brief statement from one or more representatives outlining the steps which have led to this call. In the case of an ecumenical appointment this statement should include contributions from ecumenical partners.

## **Statement by the Candidate**

The candidate makes a brief statement about *their* call to this particular ministry. In the case of a first commissioning, this should include *their* call to the Ministry of Church Related Community Work.

## **Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC**

(URC Basis of Union, Schedule D)

This Statement is to be read aloud in one of the two prescribed forms.

**VERSION II** is printed here, however **VERSION I** may be used if preferred.

With the whole Christian Church  
the United Reformed Church believes in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*All* **The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.**

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift  
continually received through the Word, the Sacraments  
and our Christian life together.

*All* **We acknowledge the gift and answer the call,  
giving thanks for the means of grace.**

The highest authority for what we believe and do  
is God's Word in the Bible,  
alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

*All* **We respond to this Word, whose servants we are  
with all God's people through the years.**

We accept with thanksgiving to God  
the witness to the catholic faith  
in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition  
by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ  
in which they stated the faith  
and sought to make its implications clear.

*All* **Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source,  
renewed for every generation.**

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union  
in which we give expression to our faith  
in forms which we believe  
contain the essential elements of the Church's life,  
both catholic and reformed;  
but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises,  
to change the Basis of Union

and to make new statements of faith  
in ever new obedience to the living Christ.

*All* **Our crucified and risen Lord,  
who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.**

Held together in the Body of Christ  
through the freedom of the Spirit,  
we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts  
and uphold the rights of personal conviction.  
For the sake of faith and fellowship  
it shall be for the church to decide  
where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

*All* **We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love  
and grow together in the peace of Christ.**

We believe that Christ gives his Church  
a government distinct from the government of the state.  
In things that affect obedience to God  
the Church is not subordinate to the state,  
but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ,  
its only Ruler and Head.  
Civil authorities are called  
to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind,  
and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

*All* **While we ourselves are servants in the world  
as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.**

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working,  
with all our fellow Christians,  
for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses,  
so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God  
and praise him more and more for ever.

*All* **Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is:  
to God be eternal glory.  
Amen.**

# Affirmations

(URC Basis of Union, Schedule F part I)

Using one of the two prescribed forms, both printed here.

## VERSION I

... N ... , do you confess anew your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

**I do.**

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

**I do.**

Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world?

Do you believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people?

And will you faithfully proclaim this Gospel?

**By the grace of God this I believe  
and this I will proclaim.**

Do you believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ?

**I do.**

Are zeal for the glory of God,  
love for the Lord Jesus Christ,  
obedience to the Holy Spirit  
and a desire for the salvation of the world,  
so far as you know your own heart,  
the chief motives which lead you to enter this ministry?

**They are.**

Do you promise to live a holy life,  
and to maintain the truth of the gospel,  
whatever trouble or persecution may arise?

**Relying on the strength of Christ, I do.**

Do you promise to care for, to challenge and to pray for  
the community,  
to discern with others God's will for the well-being of  
the community?

Do you promise to take your part in the councils of the Church  
and to enable the church to live out its calling  
to proclaim the love and mercy of God  
through working with others in both church and community  
for peace and justice in the world?

**By the grace of God, I do.**

Do you promise  
as a Church Related Community Worker of the United  
Reformed Church  
to seek its well-being, purity and peace,  
to cherish love towards all other churches  
and to endeavour always to build up  
the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

**By the grace of God, I do.**

Will you undertake to exercise your ministry  
in accordance with the Statement concerning  
the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church?

**I will, and all these things I profess and promise  
in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

or

## **VERSION II**

... N ... , will you confess anew your faith?

**I confess anew my faith in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**I believe that the Word of God in the Old and  
New Testaments,**

**discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,  
is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct  
of all God's people.**

**I believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary,  
lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross,  
and who was raised from the dead and reigns  
for evermore,**

**is the gift of God's very self to the world.**

**I believe that through him**

**God's love, justice and mercy are revealed  
and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life  
are offered to all people.**

**And by the grace of God**

**I promise to proclaim this gospel faithfully.**

**I believe that the Church is the people gathered by  
God's love**

**to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God  
through Jesus Christ.**

What leads you to this ministry?

**So far as I know my own heart,  
I believe that zeal for the glory of God,  
love for the Lord Jesus Christ,  
obedience to the Holy Spirit  
and a desire for the salvation of the world,  
are the chief motives which lead me to enter  
this ministry.**

**Relying on the strength of Christ,  
I promise to live a holy life,  
and to maintain the truth of the gospel,  
whatever trouble or persecution may arise.**

Will you faithfully fulfil the duties of your charge?

**By the grace of God I promise  
to care for, to challenge and to pray for the  
community,  
to discern with others God's will for the well-being  
of the community.**

**I promise to take my part in the councils of the Church  
and to endeavour to enable the church to live out  
its calling**

**to proclaim the love and mercy of God  
through working with others in both church  
and community**

**for peace and justice in the world.**

**As a Church Related Community Worker  
of the United Reformed Church**

**I promise to seek its well-being, purity, and peace,  
to cherish love towards all other churches,  
and to endeavour always to build up  
the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.**

**I undertake to exercise my ministry in accordance with the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church. All these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

## **Hymn of the Holy Spirit**

(NOTE: At an Induction of a previously commissioned CRCW, this hymn is instead used later in the service, after the congregational Promises.)

A possible hymn of the Holy Spirit is included on page AA1.

## **Commissioning Prayer**

(NOTE: At an Induction of a previously commissioned CRCW, this section is omitted.)

The presiding Minister prays:

God of every perfect gift,  
We give you thanks that in every generation you call  
your people  
to proclaim and to demonstrate your mercy and love.  
We thank you for the many ways your summons comes to us;  
we thank you that as you call, so you equip;  
we thank you that you draw us to share in community together.

Thank you now for ... N ... ,  
as in your name, and trusting it to be your will,  
we now commission *them* as a Church Related Community  
Worker.

Strengthen and encourage *them* with the assurance of your Holy Spirit's constant presence, so that *they* may undertake this task and all its responsibilities with calmness and confidence, with excitement and joy. In every circumstance, whether in times of ease or in times of difficulty, enable *them* to stand firm in the truth of the gospel, and to conduct *themselves* always according to your holy will. So may ... N ... 's ministry enrich the whole Church and be a blessing to every community.

*All* **Amen.**

## Promises

The presiding Minister asks members of the church-in-community and representatives of the synod to respond to the following questions:

either

Do you confess again your faith in one God, the Trinity of love – whose children we are, co-heirs with Christ, crowned with the Holy Spirit?

*All* **We do.**

or

Do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

*All* **We do.**

continuing

Do you receive ... N ... as from God,  
as a Church Related Community Worker of the United  
Reformed Church,

to serve among you here and with you in the world?

*All* **We do.**

Do you promise to pray for each other and for ... N ... ;

and do you promise to share with *them*

in seeking and doing the will of God,

to give *them* encouragement, consideration and support,

so that you grow together in faith, hope and love?

*All* **We do.**

According to circumstances, the presiding Minister may  
also invite representatives of other bodies to make a similar  
promise using suitable words.

## Hymn of the Holy Spirit

(NOTE: At a Commissioning and Induction, this hymn is instead  
used earlier in the service, after the candidate's Affirmations.)

A possible hymn of the Holy Spirit is included on page AA1.

## Induction Prayer

The presiding Minister prays:

Eternal God, you have called us into the Church

to proclaim the Gospel and make it effective in the world;

and, in your Holy Spirit, we receive all the gifts we need.

We give thanks, today, because you have given ... N ...

the necessary gifts to challenge and encourage us

in our work within the community where we live.

As we receive and induct *them* in the name of Jesus Christ  
to serve you here,  
strengthen and encourage *them*  
with the assurance of your presence, your purpose,  
and your power.  
Energise *them* in *their* tasks of caring, of challenge,  
and of prayer;  
bless *them* with resilience, imagination, and hope  
in the discerning of your will for this community's well-being.  
Here, and in the councils of the Church,  
and in every place where community is found,  
let doors and hearts be opened, through *their* influence,  
to your mercy and love.  
Give *them* joy in *their* ministry,  
and the fulfilment of being rooted in your will.  
Watch over *them* in times of trial; in weariness,  
disappointment, or frustration;  
and keep *them* from complacency and pride.  
Fill *their* home with your peace.

(Special petitions may be added at this point)

Give to *them*, and to all of us,  
ever-deeper understanding of your ways in the world;  
keep *them*, and all of us,  
compassionate and courageous in engaging with  
other people,  
reflecting and revealing the essential dignity of every life  
in your sight,  
and labouring with all people of goodwill for justice and  
peace in society.  
Through ... N ... 's ministry here  
may all of us be more and more challenged and inspired  
to respond to human need;

that our work and prayer might help all to find their voice and the strength to build a better community, at one with itself, in the peace and joy of God, made known in Jesus Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

## **Declaration of [Commissioning and] Induction**

The presiding Minister says:

In the name of Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church, and representing the ... X ... Synod of the United Reformed Church,

I declare ... N ... to be [commissioned and] inducted to the Ministry of Church Related Community Work with ... Church-in-Community.

## **Signing of the CRCW Covenant**

Copies of the Church Related Community Work Covenant are signed by the Church Related Community Worker and representatives of the Church-in-Community, the CRCW programme sub-committee, and the synod.

## **Welcome**

The newly inducted CRCW is greeted by the presiding Minister and by others duly appointed, who may include representatives of the Church-in-Community, and of such local grouping or area of churches as may exist within the synod, as well as by ecumenical, civic and community representatives.

## Giving of gifts

The Church Related Community Worker may be presented with gifts.

## Prayers of Intercession

These may be offered by someone from the Church-in-Community and end with the Lord's Prayer (if not used earlier).

## Prayer of Commitment

Help us, God, to trust you  
and to find your purpose in everything that happens to us.  
Be there with us in every experience,  
speak to us through other people,  
and give us what it takes to express your love for the world  
in all our words and works.

Take us where you want us to go,  
renewing our faith and hope, forgiving our sin,  
perfecting our praise, and filling us with confidence,  
so that your name may be glorified in us  
as it has been already and will be for ever  
in Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Friend.

*All* **Amen.**

## Hymn or Song

## Dismissal and Blessing

Go to the world again in confidence;  
play your part in God's creation and never lose heart.  
Put your faith in the risen Christ,  
who will match his stride to yours until your journey's end.  
And the blessing of the Eternal God,  
Creator, Liberator, and Sustainer,  
[or, Author of all, and living Word, and Voice of love within]  
[or, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,]  
be with you all.

*All* **Amen.**

Downloadable versions of this section, in  
PDF and Word format, can be found online  
here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

# Hymn of the Holy Spirit

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(Suitable for use at services of Ordination, Commissioning, and/or Induction)

Spirit of God, uniting us in worship:  
yours is the breath that livens every soul.  
Guarding and guiding us to take each footstep,  
inspire our growth in faith and make us whole.

Spirit of God, equipping us for service:  
yours is the voice that summons us by name.  
Comfort and challenge, stretch us and preserve us;  
so may your gift in us be fanned to flame.

Spirit of God, deploying us in mission:  
yours is the song of world-transforming grace.  
Bring now our destiny to full fruition,  
making your purpose known in every place.

Spirit of God, among us and between us,  
you who unite, equip, and so deploy:  
we pledge ourselves anew to live for Jesus,  
until we come to share in heaven's joy!

*Text: © United Reformed Church*

*Suggested Tunes:  
Highwood ('Hark, what a sound')  
or Charterhouse ('Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory')*

# Commissioning of Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers

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This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here. **There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used and these are indicated by the orange boxes.**

A commissioning service is conducted by the Synod after accreditation by the Ministries Committee on behalf of the General Assembly. The commissioning may be a special service and the Synod Lay Preaching Advocate/Commissioner may share in the leadership of it. Where the service is part of an act of worship at a meeting of the synod, the Moderator or their representative normally presides. If the service takes place on a Sunday at the lay preacher's own church, a representative of the synod normally presides.

Please adapt the pronouns in the service as appropriate.

The act of commissioning should follow the proclamation of the Word.

**Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)**

1. Introduction .....	BB3
2. Statement.....	BB4
3. Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) .....	BB4
4. Affirmations .....	BB6
5. Commissioning.....	BB8
6. Declaration .....	BB8
7. Presentation .....	BB9

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)

## Introduction

Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.

Psalm 49:1-3

or

Come, listen, all who revere God, and I will tell you what the Most High has done in my life. My mouth cried to God, my tongue extolled the Eternal One. Blessed be the Most High who has not left undone my prayers nor removed loving kindness from me.

Psalm 66:16-17, 20

or

God, our Sovereign, has bestowed on me a disciple's tongue that I may discern how to help those who are tired and weary with a word. Each morning God rouses me and excites my ear to listen as a disciple.

Isaiah 50:4

In the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
the only Head of the Church,  
we are now to commission ... N ... as an Assembly  
Accredited Lay Preacher.  
... N ... has been commended by the ... X ... Synod  
and accredited by the General Assembly of the United  
Reformed Church.

# Statement by the Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher

The Lay Preacher makes a statement concerning *their* faith and sense of calling.

## Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church

This Statement (Basis of Union, Schedule D) is read in one of the approved forms such as the one below:

This Statement is to be read aloud in one of the two prescribed forms.

**VERSION II** is printed here, however **VERSION I** may be used if preferred.

With the whole Christian Church  
the United Reformed Church believes in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**All** **The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.**

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

**All** **We acknowledge the gift and answer the call, giving thanks for the means of grace.**

The highest authority for what we believe and do is God's Word in the Bible,  
alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

**All** **We respond to this Word, whose servants we are with all God's people through the years.**

We accept with thanksgiving to God  
the witness to the catholic faith  
in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition  
by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ  
in which they stated the faith  
and sought to make its implications clear.

*All* **Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source,  
renewed for every generation.**

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union  
in which we give expression to our faith  
in forms which we believe  
contain the essential elements of the Church's life,  
both catholic and reformed;  
but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises,  
to change the Basis of Union  
and to make new statements of faith  
in ever new obedience to the living Christ.

*All* **Our crucified and risen Lord,  
who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.**

Held together in the Body of Christ  
through the freedom of the Spirit,  
we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts  
and uphold the rights of personal conviction.  
For the sake of faith and fellowship  
it shall be for the church to decide  
where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

*All* **We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love  
and grow together in the peace of Christ.**

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head.

Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

**All While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.**

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses, so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.

**All Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is:  
to God be eternal glory.  
Amen.**

## Affirmations

The congregation is invited to stand as the presiding Minister asks the Lay Preacher to affirm *their* faith:

In the light of this Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church ... N ... is now asked to answer the following questions:

... N ... , do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

**I do.**

In dependence on God's grace do you reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord and your promise to follow him and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of your life?

**I do.**

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

**I do.**

Do you accept the office of Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher of the United Reformed Church and do you promise to perform its duties?

**I do.**

Do you promise as an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher of the United Reformed Church to seek its wellbeing, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

**By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

The presiding Minister asks the congregation:

Do you, the members of this local church and the members of ... XY ... Synod receive ... N ... as an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher and promise them your prayerful support and encouragement in this ministry?

**All We do.**

## Commissioning

Ever gracious God,  
you have brought us into your Church and made us  
your witnesses,  
giving us the gifts we need to proclaim the gospel of  
your holy love.

We give thanks today for ... N ... ,  
whom you have called to be a preacher of your Word,  
and in your name we commission *them* to the office of  
Lay Preacher.

Inspire *them* with your Holy Spirit  
so that *they* will be fired with passion and always seek  
deeper understanding  
of the gospel *they* proclaim.

Sustain *them* in *their* calling, when it is easy and when it  
is difficult.

May *they* find eager hearers who respond to *their* proclamation,  
and give *them* their support and encouragement.

Keep *them* humble,

but make *them* aware of what *they* bring to the life and  
well-being of the Church,

as, through *their* preaching, the gospel is proclaimed.

Keep *them* ever hopeful and keep *them* ever joyful.

Bring them and all of us at the last to full maturity in Christ,  
in whose name we pray.

*All* **Amen.**

## Declaration

In the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
the only Head of the Church,  
and in accordance with the decision of the Synod,  
and of the General Assembly,

I declare you to be commissioned to the office  
of *Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher* in the United  
Reformed Church  
and welcome you into this office.

## **Presentation**

The certificate and also a Bible or other suitable gift  
may be presented.

The service concludes with the Lord's Supper, a prayer for  
this is included on page DD1, or with a hymn and blessing.

The following readings are appropriate:

*Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):*

Numbers 11:16-17, Isaiah 40:1-11, Isaiah 52:7-12,  
Jeremiah 1:4-10, Jeremiah 23:16-22.

*New Testament:*

Matthew 9:32-38, Luke 10:1-6, John 15:1-17, Acts 11:19-26,  
Romans 1:8-17, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, 1 Peter 4:8-14.

# Commissioning of Locally Recognised Worship Leaders

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This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here. **There are, however, some parts of the text that must be used unaltered and these are indicated by the orange boxes.**

Locally Recognised Worship Leaders are commissioned, by the synod, to lead worship in their local church or pastorate. A commissioning service is conducted by the synod after completion of an approved course of study. The service may be led by the minister of the congregation/pastorate where the Worship Leader is to undertake their ministry, or by a representative of the synod. The act of commissioning should follow the proclamation of the Word.

- 1. Introduction..... CC2
- 2. Statement ..... CC3
- 3. Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D)..... CC3
- 4. Affirmations ..... CC5
- 5. Commissioning..... CC7
- 6. Declaration ..... CC8
- 7. Presentation ..... CC8

## Introduction

Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.

Psalm 49:1-3

or

Come, listen, all who revere God, and I will tell you what the Most High has done in my life. My mouth cried to God, my tongue extolled the Eternal One. Blessed be the Most High who has not left undone my prayers nor removed loving kindness from me.

Psalm 66:16-17, 20

or

God, our Sovereign, has bestowed on me a disciple's tongue that I may discern how to help those who are tired and weary with a word. Each morning God rouses me and excites my ear to listen as a disciple.

Isaiah 50:4

In the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
the only Head of the Church,  
we are now to commission ... N ... as a Locally  
Recognised Worship Leader,  
who has been commended by the ... X ... Synod  
to lead God's people in worship within this  
congregation/pastorate.

# Statement by the Locally Recognised Worship Leader

The Worship Leader makes a statement concerning their faith and sense of calling.

## Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church

This Statement (Basis of Union, Schedule D) is read in one of the approved forms such as the one below:

This Statement is to be read aloud in one of the two prescribed forms.

**VERSION II** is printed here, however **VERSION I** may be used if preferred.

With the whole Christian Church  
the United Reformed Church believes in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*All* **The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.**

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

*All* **We acknowledge the gift and answer the call, giving thanks for the means of grace.**

The highest authority for what we believe and do is God's Word in the Bible,  
alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

*All* **We respond to this Word, whose servants we are with all God's people through the years.**

We accept with thanksgiving to God  
the witness to the catholic faith  
in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition  
by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ  
in which they stated the faith  
and sought to make its implications clear.

*All* **Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source,  
renewed for every generation.**

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union  
in which we give expression to our faith  
in forms which we believe  
contain the essential elements of the Church's life,  
both catholic and reformed;  
but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises,  
to change the Basis of Union  
and to make new statements of faith  
in ever new obedience to the living Christ.

*All* **Our crucified and risen Lord,  
who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.**

Held together in the Body of Christ  
through the freedom of the Spirit,  
we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts  
and uphold the rights of personal conviction.

For the sake of faith and fellowship  
it shall be for the church to decide  
where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

*All* **We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love  
and grow together in the peace of Christ.**

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head.

Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

*All* **While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.**

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses, so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.

*All* **Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is:  
to God be eternal glory.  
Amen.**

## Affirmations

The congregation is invited to stand as the presiding Minister asks the Lay Preacher to affirm their faith:

In the light of this Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church ... N ... is now asked to answer the following questions:

... N ... , do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

**I do.**

In dependence on God's grace do you reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord and your promise to follow him and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of your life?

**I do.**

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

**I do.**

Do you accept the office of Locally Recognised Worship Leader of the ... X ... Synod and do you promise to perform its duties faithfully?

**I do.**

Do you promise as an Locally Recognised Worship Leader of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

**By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

The presiding Minister asks the congregation:

Do you, the members of this local church/pastorate receive ... N ... as a Worship Leader and promise *them* your prayerful support and encouragement in this ministry?

*All* **We do.**

## Commissioning

O Most High,  
in worship our restless hearts find their rest in You.

*All* **May we find meaning in the music of Your praise.**

O Risen Saviour,  
in worship you proclaimed good news for the poor,  
freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind, and liberation  
for the oppressed;

*All* **may we find strength to follow and proclaim your message.**

Most Holy Spirit,  
in worship you speak to and empower us,  
filling us with grace at pulpit and table,  
in silence and song, in laughter and listening;

*All* **may we find strength to live as committed disciples.**

We give thanks today for ... N ... ,  
whom you have called to lead Your people in worship,  
and in your name we commission *them*  
to be a Locally Recognised Worship Leader to minister in  
this congregation/pastorate.

Inspire *them* with your Holy Spirit  
so that *they* will be fired with passion  
and always seek deeper understanding of the worship  
they lead.

Sustain *them* in *their* calling, when it is easy and when it  
is difficult.

Keep *them* humble, but make *them* aware of what *they* bring  
to the life and well-being of the Church, as,  
through *their* leading of worship Your people are strengthened.  
Keep *them* ever hopeful and ever joyful.

*All* **Bring ... N ... and all of us at the last  
to full maturity in Christ, in whose name we pray.  
Amen.**

## Declaration

In the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
the only Head of the Church,  
and in accordance with the decision of the Synod,  
I declare you to be commissioned to the office  
of Locally Recognised Worship Leader in this church/pastorate  
and welcome you into this office.

## Presentation

The certificate and also a Bible or other suitable gift may  
be presented.

The service concludes with the Lord's Supper; a prayer for  
this is included on page DD1, or with a hymn and blessing.

The following readings are appropriate:

*Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures:*

Numbers 11:16-17, Psalm 150 (for musicians), Isaiah 40:1-11, Isaiah 52:7-12, Jeremiah 1:4-10, Jeremiah 23:16-22.

*New Testament:*

Matthew 9:32-38, Luke 10:1-6, Luke 18: 1-7 (persistence in prayer), John 15:1-17, Acts 11:19-26, Romans 1:8-17, Colossians 3:14-17 (psalms, hymns and songs – but also teaching and thankfulness), 2 Timothy 4:1-5, 1 Peter 4:8-14.

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

# Communion Prayer for use at a service Commissioning

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## **Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers and Locally Recognised Worship Leaders**

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God is here!

*All* **God's Spirit is with us!**

Lift up your hearts

*All* **we lift them up to God!**

Let us give God our thanks and praise!

*All* **This is indeed our duty and joy!**

Eternal God,

from the beginning of time all creation worships you,  
the sun, moon, and stars dance with joy in your presence,  
all your creatures praise your most holy name,  
and we, your people, thank you for your Word.

Since the earliest times you have spoken to us;  
long ago your voice rang over the waters of the deep,  
and now sounds through natural wonder, ancient story,  
and bold prophet.

In the fullness of time your Word burst forth in Jesus  
who taught us to love and to worship, to question and  
to challenge.

He stood against the powers of his age  
and calls us to do the same today.

Before he was given over to torture, degradation, and death, Jesus shared a meal with his friends, and, during that meal, took bread, prayed the ancient blessing, and said:

Take this all of you and eat it, for this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in memory of me.

When supper was over, he took the cup of wine, again prayed the ancient prayer of blessing, gave the cup to his friends and said:

Take this all of you and drink from it, this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of our faith:

**All Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

After three days in the darkness of death  
the silence of the tomb was ruptured by your word,  
O Most High,  
filling Christ with new life,  
confounding the powers of evil that seek to rule our world,  
inspiring us to live as he lives,  
showing love and compassion,  
and preaching the gospel of your holy love.

May your Holy Spirit come upon us,  
and upon these gifts of bread and wine,  
that as we show forth Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross,  
by the broken bread and outpoured wine,

we may know, as we eat and drink,  
Jesus' presence with us, risen and ascended,  
giving himself for our spiritual nourishment and growth  
in grace.

United around this table with the whole Church,  
we offer ourselves anew  
and rejoice in the promise of Christ's coming in glory.

Give us, O Most High, tongues to extoll your great deeds,  
hearts to respond to the preaching of your Word,  
discernment to bring rest to the weary, excitement to  
the jaded,  
and joy to the downtrodden.

Bless all who dare to preach your Word  
and lead your people in worship,  
that through their ministry,  
your Church may grow in grace,  
your people be renewed and sustained to minister to  
the world.

Through Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus,  
in the loving power of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory be yours, O Most High,  
forever and ever,

*All* **Amen!**

Downloadable versions of this section, in  
PDF and Word format, can be found online  
here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

# Rededication services

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There are times in the lives of individuals and congregations when an act of renewal and rededication is valuable.

Some churches do this within an annual service to renew their relationship with ecumenical partners. In joint United Reformed-Methodist congregations the Covenant service in January or September gives an opportunity to start again. Many congregations have a special Sunday each year, which may or may not be called their Anniversary, when they mark a new beginning in their life and re-commit themselves to the work of ministry.

In 1997 the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of these congregational acts by agreeing to ask that local churches should observe the first Sunday in October each year, or another convenient date, such as rededication Sunday.

Two different orders for such a service follow. One is based on the Five Marks of Mission. The other draws on existing material which has been produced for anniversary and rededication Sundays, and focuses on the theme of unity. Neither of them needs be followed slavishly. They simply offer two models for incorporating these ideas into worship.

Themes of remembering, renewal and rededication have different significance for different local congregations, and are influenced by the hopes and fears which people have for the future of their fellowship. Within the safety and challenge of worship, they can be encouraged to let go of burdens from the past and renew their energy for the unseen future which God holds out to them.

First, there is an order for a congregational renewal of baptismal promises which is based on the Baptismal service

in this book. This offers a chance for all present to renew the promises they made at baptism, or the promises which previously were made for them by their parents, when they were young children.

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book)

# Renewal of Baptismal promises by the congregation

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This act will normally take place after the sermon. The congregation may be invited to gather around the baptistry or font, or to turn to face it. The act of renewal may be followed by a celebration of the Lord's Supper.

1. Introduction.....	FF2
2. Scripture sentences.....	FF2
3. Profession of faith.....	FF3
4. Thanksgiving for Baptism .....	FF4
5. The Peace .....	FF5

Downloadable versions of this section, in PDF and Word format, can be found online here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

## Introduction

As a community of God's people,  
let us remember that we have been baptised  
and reaffirm our commitment to follow Christ.  
In baptism, God has set us as a seal upon his heart.  
In baptism, God has brought us into union with Christ,  
made us one with all his people in heaven and on earth  
and assured us of everlasting life.

## Scripture sentences

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with jewels.                      Isaiah 61:10

You did not choose me but I chose you.  
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit,  
fruit that will last,  
so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.  
I am giving you these commands  
so that you may love one another.                                      John 15:16-17

For just as the body is one and has many members,  
and all members of the body, though many, are one body,  
so it is with Christ.

For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body –  
Jews or Greeks, slaves or free –  
and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

## Profession of faith

Let us now proclaim the faith of the Church  
in which we were baptised.

The people proclaim their faith. The Apostles' or Nicene Creed (*Rejoice and Sing* 759, 760) or Statement of Faith of the United Reformed Church (Basis of Union, para. 17 or para. 18) may be used, or a hymn of faith may be sung.

By grace, let us respond to grace.

*All* **Believing and trusting in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
I repent of my sins,  
turn away from evil,  
and turn to Christ.  
Christ alone is my Saviour and Lord.**

From the beginning,  
believers have continued  
in the worship and fellowship of the Church.  
With God's help,  
let us commit ourselves anew to this life;

*All* **I accept the gift and cost  
of following Christ  
in my daily life and work;  
and with the whole Church,  
I will proclaim by word and action  
the good news of God in Christ.**

# Thanksgiving for Baptism

Strong deliverer, holy One,  
for you alone our souls wait in silence,  
from you comes our salvation.

Your Spirit first brooded over the waters of chaos,  
bringing life to a formless waste.  
After waters flooded the earth,  
you made a covenant with your people  
and gave us the rainbow to be a sign of hope.  
Through the waters of the sea,  
you led your people out of bondage  
from slavery to freedom.

You sent your son Jesus  
who was baptised in the Jordan  
and received your Spirit.  
As we share in the baptism of his death and resurrection  
you set us free from bondage to sin  
and open the way to eternal life.  
For many waters cannot quench love.

*All*    **The waters closed in over me,  
the deep surrounded me.  
Out of the darkness I called to you  
and you answered me.  
You brought up my life from the depths.  
You are the Lord my God.**

We praise you for your Holy Spirit,  
the Spirit of joy,  
who teaches us and leads us into all truth.

You gather us in the Church through Christ,  
a people of your choosing,  
called to live justly and in peace.  
And so to you be all praise, honour and glory,  
through Jesus Christ our saviour,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit,  
lives and reigns for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Peace

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

*All* **And also with you.**

The people are invited to offer one another a sign of  
Christ's peace.

# A service for Rededication Sunday

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## Based on the Five Marks of Mission

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The Five Marks of Mission originated at the 1988 Lambeth Conference and were endorsed by the Forum of Churches Together in England in 1997. They are to proclaim the good news of the kingdom (tell), to teach baptise and nurture new believers (teach), to respond to human need by loving service (tend), to seek to transform unjust structures of society (transform) and to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation (treasure).

Objects symbolising the five marks may be brought forward, perhaps during the prayer of confession or the renewal of commitment. The service may conclude with the Lord's Supper.

- |                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Call to worship .....           | GG3 |
| 2. Hymn or song .....              | GG3 |
| 3. Prayer of Approach.....         | GG3 |
| 4. Prayer of Confession .....      | GG4 |
| 5. Assurance of Pardon .....       | GG5 |
| 6. Theme introduction.....         | GG5 |
| 7. Reading from Scripture.....     | GG5 |
| 8. Hymn or song .....              | GG5 |
| 9. Reading(s) from Scripture ..... | GG5 |

10. Hymn or song ..... GG6  
11. Prayer for the day ..... GG6  
12. Sermon or other proclamation of the Word ..... GG6  
13. Hymn or song ..... GG6  
14. Prayers of Intercession ..... GG6  
15. Hymn or song ..... GG7  
16. Renewal of commitment to mission ..... GG7  
17. Blessing ..... GG8

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## Call to worship

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

Psalm 19:7-9

## Hymn or song

## Prayer of Approach

Powerful, ever present God,  
you make yourself known to us  
through the mystery and energy of your creation.  
Help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.

You reveal your purposes  
in the ministry and mission of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
who lived and died and rose to life again.  
Help us to trust in him as our Lord and saviour.

You send your Holy Spirit  
to help us glimpse your kingdom  
and give us hope to strive for it.  
Enable us to work with you  
for your rule of justice and peace.

*All* **Amen.**

## Prayer of Confession

God of mercy,  
we confess we have failed to answer your call to mission.

You invite us to tell others the good news;  
yet too often we have been silent and fearful.  
For our unwillingness to share your gospel  
forgive us, we pray,

*All* **and help us to start again.**

You call us to teach others  
and to keep growing in faith ourselves;  
yet we have settled for easy answers  
and avoided challenging issues.  
For our resistance to your teaching  
forgive us, we pray,

*All* **and help us to start again.**

You show us in Jesus  
what it means to care for others;  
yet we would sooner sit on our hands  
than offer them in your service.  
For our slowness to follow the example of Jesus  
forgive us, we pray,

*All* **and help us to start again.**

You give us this world  
and all living things as gifts to treasure;  
yet we have damaged and despoiled them  
by ignorance, impatience and greed.  
For our failure to take care of the planet entrusted to us  
forgive us, we pray,

*All* **and help us to start again.**

You challenge your people  
by your prophets, old and new,  
to confront the injustice in their lives and communities;  
yet we feel uncomfortable  
when our double standards are brought home to us.  
For our failure to work for peace with justice  
forgive us, we pray,

*All* **and help us to start again.**  
**Amen.**

## Assurance of Pardon

The God of new beginnings  
releases us from past wrongs,  
refreshes our energy in the present  
and renews us for the future.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**  
**Amen.**

## Theme introduction

### Reading from Scripture

*Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):*  
Isaiah 65:17-25 or another appropriate passage.

### Hymn or song

### Reading from Scripture

*New Testament:*  
Matthew 28:16-20, Romans 10:5-15 or another appropriate  
passage.

## Hymn or song

### Prayer for the day

O God, who calls us in Jesus not to be afraid,  
but to tell others the good news,  
confirm us in our love for you  
and in our dedication to your service  
that we may be filled with new energy  
for the task of mission which you give us,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## **Sermon or other proclamation of the Word**

## Hymn or song

### Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, present in all creation,  
we pray for your world and your Church.

Awaken us to the pain of those in poverty,  
the distress of those in nations burdened by debt,  
the sick, the sorrowing, victims of violence and war.  
May we discover our common humanity with them  
and learn the art of finding Jesus in each sister and brother.

Where your people have lost their way  
and fallen into decline or complacency,  
give them eyes to see  
and ears to hear your summons to mission.

Where your Church is vibrant and growing,  
give your people confidence to share with others  
the lessons they are learning.

Give us courage and humour for what lies ahead.  
Fill us with wisdom to face the world  
and childlike trust in the power and goodness  
of your ultimate purposes for all you have made.  
In the name of Jesus Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

## Hymn or song

### Renewal of commitment to mission

*The congregation may be invited to stand.*

We will delay our mission no longer.  
We will live in ways that show those around us  
the good news of God's love in Jesus.

We will demonstrate by our actions  
as well as by our words how much God longs  
for the healing and wholeness of the world.

We will build one another up in love,  
so that those who encounter our common life  
will find in our sharing a foretaste of God's kingdom on earth.

*All* **Amen.**

## Dismissal and blessing

We entrust to God  
our companions on the road,  
this place from which we journey,  
and the neighbours who will share our work of mission.

And may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, (*Creator, Christ and Spirit*)  
rest upon us now and always.

*All* **Amen.**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urch.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urch.org.uk/worship-book)

# Service of rededication on the theme of unity

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1. Call to worship .....	HH2
2. Hymn or song .....	HH2
3. Introduction .....	HH2
4. Prayers of Approach .....	HH3
5. Confession .....	HH4
6. Assurance of Pardon .....	HH5
7. Prayer of the day .....	HH6
8. Hymn or song .....	HH7
9. Readings from Scripture .....	HH7
10. Sermon or other proclamation of the Word .....	HH7
11. Hymn or song .....	HH7
12. Thanksgiving and rededication .....	HH8
13. Confession of faith .....	HH10
14. Prayers for the Church and the world .....	HH10

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## Call to worship

Let us worship God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*All* **Amen.**

Lord you have been our dwelling place

*All* **in all generations.**

Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
*All* **from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

Psalm 90:1-2

or

Praise to God for the gifts of the past;

*All* **for the witness of the people of God  
who went before us.**

Praise to God for the gifts of the present:

*All* **we meet Christ and serve him  
in friend and stranger.**

Praise to God for the gifts of the future:

*All* **in darkness and in light  
the Spirit will lead us.**

## Hymn or song

### Introduction

God calls us to be one,

to share the unity

that binds the Trinity together in love.

We have come to rededicate ourselves  
to seek that unity with all of God's people,  
so that God may be glorified  
and the whole creation sing praises.

## Prayers of Approach

Loving and faithful God,  
we come into your presence rejoicing.  
We come to sing your songs of praise;  
we come to hear your words of power;  
we come to share your all-embracing love.

Be present among us  
as we seek to remember our past  
and rededicate ourselves to your future.  
Called to be your people,  
we pray in the name of your Son,  
our saviour Jesus Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Eternal God,  
you give us light to guide us  
on our journey through life.  
You give us life to fill us  
so that we may know  
we are truly your children.

We know you in Jesus Christ  
who is for us the way,  
the truth and the life.

Help us never to depart from this way  
but to walk it with patience and humility.  
May we always seek the truth,  
with honesty and openness,  
knowing that it will set us free.  
So Christ's life will be in us  
and we may come to fullness of life.

Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Confession

As followers of Jesus we have failed time and again,  
and so we make confession of our brokenness  
and seek God's forgiveness.

### Silence

We have built up walls to divide the body of Christ  
and ignored its unity.

*All* **We have sinned, God forgive us.**

We have dwelt upon what separates us,  
and not sought what makes us one in the body of Christ.

*All* **We have sinned, God forgive us.**

We have belittled each others' gifts and traditions.

*All* **We have sinned, God forgive us.**

We have not loved you, Lord,  
as we find you in our brothers and sisters in Christ.

*All* **We have sinned, God forgive us.**

or

Let us confess our sins to God.

Gracious God,  
you call us to offer ourselves to you  
in adoration and worship,

*All* **but we have held back in selfishness and pride.**

You call us to renewal through your Holy Spirit,  
*All* **but we have grown dull and tired,  
clinging to comfortable old ways.**

You call us to declare the saving power of your Son,  
*All* **but we have muffled your message  
with our doubts and indifference.**

You call us to share Christ's ministry of love,  
*All* **but we have turned aside from those in need.**

You call us to witness to Christ's rule over the nations,  
*All* **but we have not allowed Christ to rule in our lives.**

**Forgive us and help us to respond anew  
to your call to worship and service.**

## Assurance of Pardon

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
that everyone who has faith in him may not perish  
but have eternal life.

To all who repent and believe,  
I declare in the name of the Father, the Son, and the  
Holy Spirit:

God grants you the forgiveness of your sins.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

or

There is rejoicing in heaven  
when we turn from our sins.  
Rejoice, people of God;  
in Christ, your sins are forgiven!

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

## Prayer of the day

Almighty God,  
you promised through your Son  
that you would remain with your Church forever.  
We praise and thank you for those  
who brought to birth the United Reformed Church,  
in answer to your gospel call.  
Increase in us the spirit of faith and love  
that we may be worthy of our heritage,  
and that our fellowship may be an example to all;  
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Gracious God,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth takes its name,  
we give you thanks and praise  
for all we have learned of the breadth,  
length, height and depth of Christ's love,  
through the life of the United Reformed Church.

We pray for the inward strength  
and power of your Holy Spirit  
that we may be set free  
to leave the security of the familiar

and discover you calling us  
from unknown lands  
where we can be more truly  
the people you have made us to be.

We give glory to you  
in the Church and in Christ Jesus,  
praying that his power  
will continue to work in us and through us,  
and believing that he can achieve  
more than we can ever ask or conceive.

Yours are the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

**Hymn or song**

**Readings from Scripture**

Some suggested readings:

*Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):*

Psalms 133, Isaiah 11:1-9, Jeremiah 31:31-34

*New Testament:*

John 15:1-10, John 17:20-26, 1 Peter 2:4-10, Romans 12:1-2

**Sermon or other proclamation of  
the Word**

**Hymn or song**

## Thanksgiving and rededication

For the worship offered in prayer and praise,  
for the preaching of the Word,  
for the celebration of the Sacraments,  
through this church.

*All* **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the faith of all believers in Christ,  
for the carrying of the gospel into all the world,  
for the furtherance of the unity of all God's people  
enabled by this church.

*All* **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the support and nurture of God's people,  
for the care of young and old,  
for the calling of all to a life of service,  
through this church.

*All* **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the proclamation of God's truth,  
for the care of the downtrodden,  
for the giving of hope and courage  
enabled by this church.

*All* **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the opposing of all that is evil,  
for the promoting of human worth,  
for action for peace and justice,  
through this church.

*All* **All praise and thanks to God.**

For all who by word and deed  
have brought this church into being,  
for their living example to us,  
for their faith and their hopes and dreams  
built upon Jesus Christ the cornerstone.

*All* **All praise and thanks to  
God.**

*or*

We give you thanks and praise, O God,  
that you have led us as a shepherd,  
guiding your flock towards the river of life  
which flows through the holy city.  
We give you thanks and praise, O God,  
for the future you have prepared for us  
and the mission you share with us  
until all things are gathered into one in Christ  
and there is no hurt, no harm, on all your holy mountain.

Until that day  
may we proclaim the gospel with courage and integrity,  
point to the kingdom with excitement and commitment,  
and let our self-seeking plans die  
so that resurrection may burst forth  
surprising us with joy.

Encourage us in the tasks which are before us,  
give us your consolation in our failures,  
and never let us become complacent.  
Confirm us in your Holy Spirit  
that, in our life together, we may find peace.  
Grant us the strength to live in the world for your reign  
and hope in the fulfilment of the gospel of Jesus Christ  
our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

Covenant God, in your presence,  
within the living community of the gathered saints,  
in the company of the communion of those  
who journeyed alongside you before us

we reaffirm our delight in sharing our lives with you.

*All* **You have been our God and we have been your people.**

We renew our commitment to serve and follow you.

*All* **You are our God and we are your people.**

We rededicate ourselves to care for the world  
around us in your name.

*All* **You shall be our God and we shall be your people.**

Preserve us from seeking acclaim and success  
in the eyes of the world,  
guard us from needing to be needed  
before we see your love for us,  
protect us from faith that asks no questions and risks nothing.  
Where you lead may we follow, today and every day.

*All* **Amen.**

## Confession of faith

An appropriate statement of faith may be said.

## Prayers for the Church and the world

The service may continue with the Lord's Supper.

# Statement of Faith – adopted in 1972

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We believe in the one living and true God,  
creator, preserver and ruler of all things  
in heaven and earth,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
Him alone we worship,  
and in him we put our trust.

We believe that God, in his infinite love for men,  
gave his eternal Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who became man,  
lived on earth in perfect love and obedience,  
died upon the cross for our sins,  
rose again from the dead  
and lives for evermore, saviour, judge and king.

We believe that, by the Holy Spirit,  
this glorious Gospel is made effective  
so that through faith we receive the forgiveness of sins,  
newness of life as children of God  
and strength in this present world to do his will.

We believe in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church,  
in heaven and on earth,  
wherein by the same Spirit,  
the whole company of believers is made one Body of Christ,  
to worship God and serve him and all men  
in his kingdom of righteousness and love.

We rejoice in the gift of eternal life,  
and believe that, in the fullness of time,  
God will renew and gather in one all things in Christ,  
to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urc.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urc.org.uk/worship-book)

# Alternative Statement of Faith – adopted in 1997

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We believe  
in the one and only God,  
Eternal Trinity,  
from whom, through whom and for whom  
all created things exist.  
God alone we worship;  
in God we put our trust.

We worship God,  
source and sustainer of creation,  
whom Jesus called Father,  
whose sons and daughters we are.

We worship God  
revealed in Jesus Christ,  
the eternal Word of God made flesh;  
who lived our human life,  
died for sinners on the cross;  
who was raised from the dead,  
and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God;  
who lives eternally,  
as saviour and sovereign,  
coming in judgement and mercy,  
to bring us to eternal life.

We worship God,  
ever present in the Holy Spirit;  
who brings this Gospel to fruition,

assures us of forgiveness,  
strengthens us to do God's will,  
and makes us sisters and brothers of Jesus,  
sons and daughters of God.

We believe  
in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,  
united in heaven and on earth:  
on earth, the Body of Christ,  
empowered by the Spirit  
to glorify God and to serve humanity;  
in heaven, eternally one with the power,  
the wisdom and the love of God in Trinity.

We believe that,  
in the fullness of time,  
God will renew and gather in one  
all things in heaven and on earth  
through Christ,  
and be perfectly honoured and adored.

We rejoice in God  
who has given us being,  
who shares our humanity  
to bring us to glory,  
our source of prayer and power of praise;  
to whom be glory, praise and adoration,  
now and evermore.

**Downloadable versions of this section, in  
PDF and Word format, can be found online  
here: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)**

# A treasury of prayers

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## Eastern Church Liturgy, Third Century

We give thee hearty thanks for the rest of the past night,  
for the gift of a new day,  
with its opportunities for pleasing thee.  
Grant that we may so pass its hours  
in the freedom of thy service,  
that at eventide we may again give thanks unto thee;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

O thou who art the light of the minds that know thee,  
the life of the souls that love thee,  
and the strength of the hearts that serve thee;  
help us so to know thee that we may truly love thee;  
so to love thee that we may fully serve thee,  
whom to serve is perfect freedom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Liturgy of Malabar, Fifth Century

Grant, O Lord, that the ears which have heard  
the voice of thy songs  
may be closed to the voice of clamour and dispute;  
that the eyes which have seen thy great love  
may also behold thy blessed hope;  
that the tongues which have sung thy praise  
may speak the truth;

that the feet which have walked thy courts  
may walk in the region of light;  
and that the bodies which have partaken of thy living Body  
may be restored in newness of life.  
Glory be to thee for thine unspeakable gift.

*All* **Amen.**

## Columba (c.521-597)

Be thou a bright flame before me,  
be thou a guiding star above me,  
be thou a smooth path below me,  
be thou a kindly shepherd behind me,  
today, tonight and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## Mozarabic Sacramentary, Seventh Century

Grant us, O Lord, to pass this day in gladness and peace,  
without stumbling and without stain;  
that reaching the eventide victorious over all temptation,  
we may praise thee, the eternal God,  
who art blessed, and dost govern all things,  
world without end.

*All* **Amen.**

## Gregorian Sacramentary

May God Almighty direct our days in his peace,  
and grant us the gifts of his blessing;  
may he deliver us in all our troubles,  
and establish our minds in the tranquillity of his peace;  
may he so guide us through things temporal  
that we finally lose not the things eternal.

*All* **Amen.**

## Gelasian Sacramentary

Almighty and everlasting God,  
the Comfort of the sad, the Strength of sufferers,  
let the prayers of those that cry out of any tribulation  
come unto thee;  
that all may rejoice to find that thy mercy  
is present with them in their afflictions;  
through Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Alcuin (735-804)

Eternal Light, shine into our hearts,  
Eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil,  
Eternal Power, be our support,  
Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance,  
Eternal Pity, have mercy upon us;  
that with all our heart and mind  
and soul and strength we may seek thy face  
and be brought by thine infinite mercy  
to thy holy presence;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Sarum Breviary, Eleventh Century

O God, who through the grace of thy Holy Spirit,  
dost pour the gift of love into the hearts of thy faithful people;  
grant unto us health, both of mind and body,  
that we may love thee with our whole strength,  
and with entire satisfaction may perform those things  
which are pleasing unto thee;  
through Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

Merciful God, to thee we commend ourselves  
and all those who need thy help and correction.  
Where there is hatred, give love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is sadness, joy;  
where there is darkness, light.  
Grant that we may not seek so much  
to be consoled, as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for in giving, we receive,  
in pardoning we are pardoned,  
and dying we are born into eternal life.

*All* **Amen.**

## Richard of Chichester (c.1197-1253)

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits thou hast won for me,  
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.  
O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,  
may I know thee more clearly,  
love thee more dearly,  
and follow thee more nearly; for ever and ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## Mechthild of Magdeburg (c.1210-c.1280)

O sweet and loving God,  
when I stay asleep too long,  
oblivious to all your many blessings,  
then, please, wake me up,  
and sing to me your joyful song.  
It is a song without noise or notes.  
It is a song of love beyond words,  
of faith beyond the power of human telling.  
I can hear it in my soul,  
when you awaken me to your presence.

*All* **Amen.**

## Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416)

God of your goodness, give me yourself,  
for you are sufficient for me ...  
If I were to ask anything less  
I should always be in want,  
for in you alone do I have all.

*All* **Amen.**

## Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556)

Teach us, good Lord, to serve thee as thou deservest;  
to give, and not count the cost;  
to fight, and not to heed the wounds;  
to toil, and not to seek for rest;  
to labour, and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do thy will;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## John Calvin (1509-1564)

Most gracious God, our heavenly Father,  
in whom alone dwelleth all fullness of light and wisdom:  
illuminate our minds, we beseech thee, by thy Holy Spirit,  
in the true understanding of thy Word.

Give us grace that we may receive it  
with reverence and humility unfeigned.

May it lead us to put our whole trust in thee alone;  
and so to serve and honour thee,  
that we may glorify thy holy name,  
and edify our neighbours by a good example.

And since it hath pleased thee  
to number us among thy people,

O help us to pay thee the love and homage that we owe,  
as children to our Father, and as servants to our Lord.

We ask this for the sake of our Master and Saviour.

*All* **Amen.**

## Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

Christ has no body now on earth but yours;  
yours are the only hands with which he can do his work,  
yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world,  
yours are the only eyes through which his compassion  
can shine forth upon a troubled world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

*All* **Amen.**

## after John Donne (c.1571-1631)

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening  
into the house and gate of heaven,

to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,  
where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling,  
but one equal light;  
no voice nor silence, but one equal music;  
no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession;  
no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity;  
in the habitation of thy glory and dominion,  
world without end.

*All* **Amen.**

## Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)

Strengthen us O God, to relieve the oppressed,  
to hear the groans of poor prisoners,  
to reform the abuses of all professions;  
that many be made not poor to make a few rich;  
for Jesus Christ's sake.

*All* **Amen.**

## Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

Keep us, O Lord, while we tarry on this earth,  
in a serious seeking after thee,  
and in an affectionate walking with thee,  
every day of our lives;  
that when thou comest,  
we may be found not hiding our talent,  
nor yet asleep with our lamp unfurnished,  
but waiting and longing for our Lord,  
our glorious King, for ever and ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

O Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us:  
let thy peace rule in our hearts;  
and may it be our strength and song,  
in the house of our pilgrimage.

We commit ourselves to thy care and keeping this day;  
let thy grace be mighty in us, and sufficient for us,  
and let it work in us both to will and to do  
of thine own good pleasure,  
and grant us strength for all the duties of the day.  
Keep us from sin; give us the rule over our own spirits,  
and keep us from speaking unadvisedly with our lips.  
May we live together in peace and holy love,  
and do thou command thy blessing upon us,  
even life for evermore.

Prepare us for all the events of the day;  
for we know not what a day may bring forth.  
Give us grace to deny ourselves;  
to take up our cross daily,  
and to follow in the steps of our Lord and Master.

*All* **Amen.**

## Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Bless me, O Lord,  
and let my food strengthen me to serve thee,  
for Christ's sake.

*All* **Amen.**

## John Angell James (1785-1859)

O Holy Spirit, the Comforter,  
come and dwell in our souls;  
make our bodies thy temple.  
Fill our minds with thy light,  
and our hearts with thy love,  
that over our whole character thy power may be seen  
in the beauties of holiness.

May we live as something sacred to thee  
as well as perfected by thee.  
Come in all thy sevenfold energy,  
and replenish us with thy illuminating,  
comforting, sanctifying influence.  
Baptise us with celestial fire,  
and give us in thine abundant grace  
the earnest of glory everlasting.

*All* **Amen.**

## Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

O Lord, in whom is our hope,  
remove far from us, we pray thee,  
empty hopes and presumptuous confidence.  
Make our hearts so right with thy most holy and loving heart,  
that hoping in thee we may do good;  
until that day when faith and hope  
shall be abolished by sight and possession,  
and love shall be all in all.

*All* **Amen.**

## Cardinal Newman (1801-1890)

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life,  
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,  
the busy world is hushed,  
the fever of life is over and our work is done;  
then, Lord, in your mercy, grant us safe lodging,  
a holy rest and peace at the last;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

or

Lord, support us by your grace  
through all the hours of life's day:  
until the shadows lengthen, the busy world is hushed,  
the fever of life is over, and the evening comes.  
Then Lord, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging,  
a holy rest, and peace at the last;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## G E Darlaston (1876-1931)

God, our Father, we thank thee for thy welcoming spirit  
that meets us as we assemble ourselves together for worship.  
We thank thee for thy greeting of peace  
and for the sacred joy that awaits us as our minds are drawn  
into the stream of common thought and holy purpose.  
Help each one of us to give himself to the leading of thy Spirit,  
not holding back in any reluctance  
or self-complacency or indifference,  
but with out-stretched minds and aspiring souls  
to come together to thy holy hill.

Each one has some gift of heart and thought to bring,  
each some failing or sin to confess,  
each has some praise and prayer,  
and we would lift many voices as one voice,  
and many petitions as one petition,  
to the throne of thy grace.

Lead us into the fellowship of holy worship,  
and weave the varied strains of many hearts  
into one symphony of praise;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## William Temple (1881-1944)

O Lord Jesu Christ, who didst pray  
for thy disciples that they might be one,  
even as thou art one with the Father:  
draw us to thyself, that in common love  
and obedience to thee we may be united to one another,  
in the fellowship of the one Spirit,  
that the world may believe that thou art Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

*All* **Amen.**

## Prayer of General Thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,  
we, your unworthy servants,  
give you most humble and hearty thanks  
for all your goodness and loving kindness  
to us and to all people.

We bless you for our creation, preservation,  
and all the blessings of this life;  
but above all for your immeasurable love

in the redemption of the world  
by our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for the means of grace,  
for the hope of glory.

Give us, we pray,  
such a sense of all your mercies,  
that with truly thankful hearts,  
we may show forth your praise,  
not only with our lips but in our lives,  
by giving up ourselves to your service,  
and by walking before you in holiness  
and righteousness all our days;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be all honour and glory,  
for ever and ever.

*All* **Amen.**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

# Liturgical Resources for Marking the end of a Local Congregation's Journey

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## Note

There are many emotions when a congregation decides that it has reached the end of its journey and Synod Moderators, or their designees, will wish to work with the congregation to explore these emotions at the final service.

When done well, these services, like a good funeral, can be celebratory as well as healing. There can be anger in a local church where some wish to close but others don't.

There will inevitably be sadness, but also maybe a sense of relief when those who have been carrying more than their fair share of work are able to stop. There may also be guilt – and a sense of failure – from both minister and members. They may ask why they have not been able to pass on the faith, or why

this congregation has closed on their watch. Like a funeral service, the final service of a congregation needs to tell its story, acknowledge the stages of grief, and allow the story of the church's life to be told.

There are, of course, practical arrangements which have already been taken care of – where will hymnbooks, fittings and furnishings go? The Synod can assist with this and with ensuring that records are suitably archived. It is helpful if all this has been done, or at least arranged, before the final service so that the service marks conclusion, grieving and consolation alongside completion, gratitude and celebration.

A range of resources are offered here, to use or adapt as might be useful. We offer two sets of readings and commentaries upon them to help build a sermon and a

Communion Prayer, as some congregations have found that the gathered church celebrating this sacrament together one last time is very powerful indeed.

## Calls to Worship

As a mother has compassion for her child  
so our God is tender-hearted towards us.

*All* **Our Creator knows how we are made  
and remembers that we are breath and dust.**

The days of our lives are like summer grasses,  
*All* **like the wildflowers that flourish today and will be  
gone tomorrow,  
their seeds dispersed to the wind.**

But the steadfast love of God is from everlasting to  
everlasting,  
*All* **and for generation after generation.**

(Based on Psalm 103:13-17)

or

In the music and stories and silence we share:  
*All* **speak to us, Christ Jesus**

In the laughter and tears and memories we share:  
*All* **comfort us, Christ Jesus**

In the friendship and hospitality we share:  
*All* **be with us, Christ Jesus**

As we give thanks for what has been,  
as we pray for what is yet to come,  
as we celebrate all we have given,  
as we grieve all we have lost:

*All* **risen Jesus, meet us here.**  
**Amen.**

or

You give us time, O Most High, for every matter under  
heaven

*All* **a time to be born and a time to die.**

Risen Jesus we know that, with you,  
all journeys start with excitement, a sense of adventure,  
and some trepidation,

*All* **but all journeys reach their conclusion in you.**

Be with us, Gentle Spirit,  
as we gather today to mark the end of this congregation's  
journey,

*All* **to celebrate and to mourn.**

We come, Eternal Trinity, to give thanks and to grieve,  
to laugh and to cry, to remember and to let go,  
to acknowledge that you give us all

*All* **a time to be born and a time to die.**

or

God, whose love brought creation into being  
and is in every unfolding moment – You are with us  
God, who is seen in the life of Jesus  
and found in the living Word in the Bible – You are with us  
God, who lives within us through the Holy Spirit  
and is with us every step of the way – You are with us  
Let us worship God.

# Prayers of Approach, Confession, and Grace

Source of life,  
Creator of the changing seasons,  
of beginnings and endings and all that is in between,  
great is your faithfulness to us.

We gather here today for the last time  
in this building where generations have worshipped  
before us.

We come with many and varied emotions,  
conscious of the weightiness of this occasion,  
and the loss and trepidation that change can bring.

Holy Spirit, helper and comforter,  
breathe on us your peace beyond words.  
Jesus, God-with-us, let us feel your presence beside us.  
Mothering God, God of Abraham, Moses and Ruth,  
the stories of our faith reveal you as a nomadic God.  
Never contained by walls or by expectations,  
You move among and journey with your people.

Here, in silence, and in the safety of your steadfast love,  
we bring you our fears and our failures.

(silence is held)

For all that we have neglected or left undone,  
for mistakes we have made,  
for opportunities we have missed,  
forgive us.

Restore our peace. Refresh our faith. Renew our hope.

*All* **Amen.**

## Assurance of grace

Hear the Good News and rejoice!

God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding  
in love.

Wherever we may go, grace will find us.

Even if we were to fly up to the heavens.

Even if we were to go down, deep into the bowels of the earth.

Even if we were to take the wings of the morning,

and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there.

Even there. We would not be beyond the reach of God's  
healing and forgiveness.

(Based on words from Psalms 103 and 139)

or

Eternal God, we meet with you in this chapel,

as generations have met before us.

We come with hearts full of past memories,

of present concerns and of future hopes.

God of the present time, of ages past, and of all the ages  
that are to be,

we worship you and praise you that your presence is not  
just now,

but through all time; not just here, but everywhere.

Loving God, we come carrying a burden of sorrow mixed  
with thanksgiving.

you walked our way in Jesus Christ, your love made flesh,

and you know what it is to care, to laugh, to weep.

Help us, as we worship, to open our hearts to you and to  
know your love for us.

Guiding God, whose will is revealed to your children through  
the Holy Spirit

we place the ... Y ... years of the life of this fellowship in  
your hands.

Come to us as comforter and stay with us as strength  
from above.

Living God, hear us as we confess to you the ways in  
which we have hurt others,  
the ways in which we have failed you,  
the ways in which we have failed in our calling to be  
your people.

In your mercy, forgive us, fill us with your peace, we pray,  
and restore us as your children.

Jesus says to all and to each 'your sins are forgiven,  
be made whole'.

He also says 'follow me'. And so we follow in the example  
of our saviour Jesus  
as we pray the words we gave his followers to pray.  
Our Father...

or

Holy One, we come today with a range of emotions,  
we celebrate and yet we mourn,  
we laugh and yet we cry,  
we give thanks and yet we feel guilty,  
we are relieved to lay down the burden  
but yet wish we'd had more strength.

Enfold us in your love, Lord Jesus, as we weep and  
laugh with you.

Remind us of our journey's start as we reach the end of  
this journey.

Bless us in the complexity of letting go, that our future  
steps are secure.

Forgive us when we've been tempted to despair,  
when the recriminations have been more appealing  
than acceptance,  
when we've become angry with the choices of others,  
when we've blamed ourselves for social forces we  
can't control,  
and when we've forgotten it is your will not ours that matters.

Move us on, O Wise Spirit, that as we let this grain of  
wheat die,  
rich fruits are released from these resources.  
May the witness of this congregation over the last ... Y ... years,  
resonate in harvests elsewhere  
that, in your good time, we may rejoice in your Kingdom  
where all are healed and made new again.

*All* **Amen.**

## Prayer for Illumination

Though the trees don't blossom,  
though the fields seem bereft of harvest,  
though the herd seems to have strayed,  
we will still praise you, O God, our life and our salvation  
as you speak to us through stillness and silence,  
through Word and song, [through bread and wine]  
and through each other as we hear your Word  
proclaimed and expounded.

Give us the grace to hear, understand, and follow.

*All* **Amen.**

## Suggested Readings

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, Habakkuk 3:17-19, St John 12:20-26

or

Leviticus 25:1-4, St John 15:1-11, Acts 1:1-11

## Sermon Notes

### *Ecclesiastes*

Ecclesiastes is a book which ponders the irony of life: the injustice with which we live, the meaningless of human toil, the limitations of wisdom and even of righteousness. Yet, at one and the same time, the author is, like Habakkuk, convinced of God's existence and loving kindness. The author is determined to believe in God's sovereign will which has predetermined human history, and even the cycles of nature. The author believes that the limitations of humanity mean we can never truly know God's purposes but must trust them. While we may struggle with the ideas of predestination inherent in our tradition, there are some rich veins here for a sermon marking the end of a congregation's journey. These contradictions between God's sovereignty, our ignorance, and the unpredictability of life even under God's foreknowledge led the author to identify the goodness of life and enjoyment of it as a gift of God.

In the suggested passage, seven pairs of times in human life are mentioned; in Jewish thought, seven is a number suggesting completeness. Birth and death are mentioned first – the most dramatic events in our lives, birth and death are echoed in the agricultural practice of planting and

uprooting. Warfare is balanced with healing and building, human emotions are balanced with weeping and laughing finding their way into the list of pairs. The writer has a time to enjoy life and a time to mourn, to look for and relinquish things that matter. Rending garments as a sign of mourning is well known within the Jewish tradition, and this is balanced by the need to sew and repair. There's a time to speak and be silent; at services like this, both are needed to allow the processing of such deep emotions. Finally, the writer sees the emotions of hate and love giving way to war and peace.

The skilled preacher will identify the range of emotions present, citing them in God's good purpose. This congregation has been born, has planted a rich harvest, and now it has its natural ending. It has slain giants in its history (some of the notable achievements of the past could be mentioned – social action, serving the community, nurturing vocations) and has been a healing presence for many. It has broken down resistance to God's gracious calling, and built up the local community in tangible ways – the preacher may wish to give examples. It has mourned as people have died, and has supported the bereaved as they've let go of their loved ones into God's gentle keeping, turning mourning into dancing. It has celebrated with those who have married here and has supported those whose marriages have, sadly, ended. It has been a place where God's truth was sought and has encouraged those who have lost their sense of faith. It has been a place where silent companionship has been balanced with prophetic words. It has been a place where hatred has given way to love.

When those who are left wonder what they have gained for their toil, they need to think of the couples who have met and

married here, the children baptised at the font, the elders ordained, those who left for war but never returned, and those who rebuilt the country after wars. They need to think of the lives touched and changed by God through the ministry of Word and Sacrament and give thanks for all that has been good here; for all who have found rest and healing.

## **Habakkuk**

Habakkuk is an unusual book in that it's an extended conversation between the prophet and God. The conversation is about how to live faithfully in unjust situations that seem to undermine the idea that God is fair and righteous. It is a book for hard times. It may have been written as the power of Egypt was eclipsed by the new superpower of the age, Babylon. The writer has seen dreadful things and implores God to intervene; God's responses confirm action in history but in ways that surprise the prophet – God, for example, was raising up Babylon against Israel. Not a welcome message for Habakkuk's audience! In response to a profound revelation by God, Habakkuk penned the suggested passage in a remarkable affirmation of faith. All the disasters mentioned would spell famine for an agricultural people, yet Habakkuk declares he will still praise God.

Maybe the congregation feel that disaster has befallen them; the flock has wandered off, new growth has not been seen, the fields are barren, instead of being ripe for harvest. Yet still we praise God. It maybe that, as the writer of Ecclesiastes held, we cannot discern God's sovereign purpose. It may be that a smaller Church will be more effective at proclaiming the Gospel – after all a

persecuted, poorly educated, group of social misfits changed the world, overthrew slavery, raised the status of women, rescued foundlings and proclaimed the Gospel through word and deed in the earliest Church. Whatever God is up to is hard for us to comprehend but, like Habakkuk, we need to balance our natural fears, pain, mourning, and disappointment with a determination to praise God anyway!

## **St John**

With the benefit of hindsight, we know that Jesus was speaking here about his death and resurrection. The Greeks who heard him might have been a bit puzzled by the agricultural reference to a seed falling to the ground, seeming to die, but germinating bringing forth a new plant. Death brings new life. Jesus, in the passage which follows, acknowledges his trepidation 'my soul is troubled' and ponders if he should ask the Father to save him from this. Yet, of course, he accepts God's will.

Here again the skilled preacher can address the range of emotions that the congregation may have but find a way forward in this idea of death bringing life; we see it with seeds, with Jesus and with churches. Of all people, Christians should be the most sanguine about death; acknowledging the pain of loss but seeing the potential for renewal and life. The resources unleashed by the end of this congregation will bring new life to others. The members dispersing (hopefully) to other congregations will enrich those churches. The stories and history of this place will be a blessing to others as, in God, nothing is lost.

## **Leviticus 25:1-4 – Jubilee**

Instructions to Israel for living as God’s distinctive people. Written into the law was the idea that the 50th year was a holy year, a time of celebration and rest. Old Testament scholar Meg Warner describes this jubilee as a ‘return to factory settings’. Debts were wiped out... slaves and prisoners set free... land and property surrendered. The underlying message is that land and people ultimately belong to no-one but God. Verse 23 reads, ‘The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants.’ The jubilee idea may resonate with the closure of a church. We have been tenants in this building. Now we hand it back to our Synod, with the hope and prayer that this resource will be used for God’s purposes in new ways. We have worked together in this place. Now we are released from our work. We lay down our responsibilities. Our letting go frees up resources and energy. It gives us the gift of fallow time... time to rest and heal, to be replenished. It releases us to do new things. Our identity as God’s people is not shaken.

## **John 15:1-11 – vine and branches**

Part of Jesus’ ‘farewell discourse’, the words he spoke to his disciples to prepare them for his death, and their life together beyond it. The grapevine is a rich metaphor and could be expanded to discuss the natural cycles and seasons of nature. In growing and tending grapevines, pruning is vital. The best, sweetest fruit are the ones that grow close to the vine. Branches that are dead, unproductive, or rambling need to be cut away, otherwise they divert and deplete valuable energy and nutrients. This isn’t a threat. It’s a life-giving promise.

It's permission to let go of the things we are struggling to sustain. It affirms that God desires our flourishing. It comes with an assurance that we are loved (15:9).

## **Acts 1:1-11 – Ascension**

The Ascension story is a story about an ending, loss, and transition into a new phase, a new way of being a community of Jesus-followers. And it comes with promises and assurances that may be helpful when a church is closing. Here, the disciples are losing Jesus for a second time. For all the glory of the Ascension event, it must have left them feeling bereft and confused... wondering what God's plan might be, and where to go from here. The risen Jesus has spent 40 days with his disciples preparing them for this moment of parting: sharing meals... speaking to them about the kingdom of God... reminding them of the scriptures and the resources of their faith. The disciples keep looking back, nostalgically, to when Israel was a sovereign nation, and asking... when are we going to get back to that, Lord? When will God restore all that we have lost? Jesus teaches them that they're going to have to adjust their perspective, and loosen their grasp on some of the ideas and patterns they've always depended on. Their expectations have been too narrow. He encourages them to keep an open mind, saying 'it is not for you to know the times...' He encourages them to think bigger and broader, '...to the ends of the earth'. And Jesus promises that help will come. They're not going to be alone. They will receive power from the Holy Spirit. From now on they will carry Jesus' presence within them, just as Jesus carries them with him into the heart of God.

## Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God, Eternal Majesty,  
*All* **creator of all things seen and unseen,**  
who inspired the foundation of this congregation, nurtured it  
*All* **and who now calls us to commit it to loving memory.**

We believe in Jesus, enfleshed Word,  
*All* **who was born, lived, died, and rose to new life  
to set us free.**

Jesus called hundreds of people to be part of this  
congregation,  
nurtured them at his table, inspired them to work for the  
coming kingdom,  
danced with them in joy,  
*All* **and consoled them in bad times.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, Fire of Love,  
*All* **who inspires us and always drives us on,**  
who leads us now in our sadness and celebration,  
calling us to respond to the Gospel's call  
*All* **in new ways, new congregations and new contexts.**  
**Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

As we give thanks for all that this place has meant to us,  
we also bring to God our prayers of concern for the world.  
Let us pray.

Ever-present God, we give thanks for the *doors and windows* –  
through which we see the world and go out to serve the  
world's needs.

We pray for countries in turmoil...  
we pray for all who struggle with  
(...here insert contemporary issues with which we struggle),  
and for those who live in the deepest poverty.  
Lord in your mercy...

**All** **hear our prayer**

We give thanks for the *pews* – where people have  
gathered together.  
We pray for communities in deep need – praying for  
governments tackling the climate emergency, for the  
United Nations,  
for those who serve the common good in our hospitals  
and care homes.  
Lord in your mercy...

**All** **hear our prayer**

We give thanks for the *pulpit*, from which we have heard  
your truth.  
We pray for all those who seek justice in the world...  
for migrants seeking safety, for law courts and prisons,  
for those seeking reconciliation where there is violence.  
Lord in your mercy...

**All** **hear our prayer**

We give thanks for the *roof and walls*  
and we pray for those without a permanent home –  
with no home at all, living in temporary accommodation,  
or struggling to pay rent or find a mortgage.  
Lord in your mercy...

**All** **hear our prayer**

We give thanks for the *font*, in which babies and children  
have been baptised.

We pray for young people known to us, for schools and  
colleges,  
for those taking exams or any whose future feels uncertain.  
Lord in your mercy...

**All** **hear our prayer**

We give thanks for the *people*  
who have been part of the life of this chapel,  
especially those who are now safe in the glory of heaven.  
We pray for those who grieve,  
for any who are sick or troubled,  
and we give thanks for all the love and care  
known here through the years.  
Lord in your mercy...

**All** **hear our prayer**

We give thanks that you are always ready to listen when  
we pray  
and that your blessing is for all your children, in Jesus' name.

**All** **Amen.**

or

We pray to God our loving Father,  
through Christ the cornerstone and in the power of the  
Holy Spirit,  
We thank you, God, that you know our needs,  
that you have come to be with us in Jesus Christ,  
and that your love and care never fail

Lord hear us

**All** **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for the living stones which make up the body of  
Christ in God's world

We give thanks for the faithful years of service given by  
so many in this church –  
for the joys, the pains, the love and the heartache.

We pray for what is to come in this building – that your  
wisdom may guide us.

And we pray for the continuing witness of ... X ... here and  
the wider church in ... Y ...

Lord hear us

*All* **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for the stones which are rejected;  
for those people who feel they do not fit into society,  
those whose voices are not heard and who feel without hope,  
people who are refugees, homeless, or out of work.  
We pray for those in our communities who are lonely –  
that we may reach out to them with your love.

Lord hear us

*All* **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for the stones which make us stumble;  
for those who live in fear of violence – in ... Z ...  
for those who face domestic violence,  
and those living with addiction, illness, disability or infirmity

Lord hear us

*All* **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for each one here today – for those we love,  
for those who love us

Lord hear us

*All* **Lord graciously hear us.**

We hold onto God's promise, this day and each day which  
is to come:

'Once you were not a people, but now you are my people,  
once you have not received mercy, but now you have  
received mercy'

And so may the mercy, peace and love of God surround us  
and all those for whom we have prayed

Now and forever,

*All* **Amen.**

## Communion Prayer

Eternal One,

long ago you called a people as your own,  
freed them from slavery and led them dry-shod through the sea.  
You taught them to be free and, through the prophets,  
how to use that freedom wisely.

You sustained them in the bitterness of exile,  
and restored their hope in your own good time.

In Jesus, you became one of us,  
teaching and loving, listening and healing,  
turning back the wind and overturning religion's tables.  
For this the powers turned on him,  
subjecting him to illegal trial, torture, and a rebel's execution,  
showing your weakness on a cross of shame and defeat.

But you did not leave him in the grave,  
but called him forth to new life, a life available to us all.

Before he was given over to death,  
he shared in the simplicity of a meal with his friends,  
during that meal he took bread, said the blessing,  
broke the bread and said:

Take this all of you and eat it. This is my body which is  
broken for you.

Do this in memory of me.

After the supper he took the cup filled with wine,  
gave it to his friends and said:

‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’

For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup,  
we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Let us proclaim the mystery of our faith:

*All* **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Send now your Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of  
bread and wine,  
that as we eat and drink we are swept up into your presence,  
O God,  
filled with your Spirit, and enabled to follow where you call.

We give thanks for the life and witness of this congregation,  
and pray for our future paths, that, as we follow you into  
new places,  
you continue to enable us to serve and be a blessing to others.

May the love that we have experienced here continue to transform us.

May the grace that we have shared here continue to call others to yourself.

May the zeal that led to this church's foundation sustain us now.

May the memory of the blessings we have received here, enable us to bless others.

May the resources released from this congregation be used to further your realm,

that, at the end, we may come rejoicing into your presence forever more.

*All* **Amen.**

## Post Communion Prayer

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die...a time to weep and a time to laugh...a time to mourn and a time to dance...a time to keep and a time to throw away...a time to tear and a time to sew.

As we give thanks for the toil of workers in this congregation over the last ... Y ... years,  
we thank you again for feeding us with your very self  
O Christ.

As we have tasted and seen that you are good,  
we mix our weeping with our laughter,  
our mourning with our dancing, and our rending and our sewing,  
that as we throw away the assets of this place, we keep the  
experience of your love.

We go from this place with all our mixed emotions  
but sure in your hope for our future.

*All* **Amen.**

# Litany of Thanksgiving

Blessed be the name of God,  
whose Word has long been proclaimed within this  
hallowed place.

*All* **We give you thanks, O God.**

As generations have prayed their prayers and sung your  
praises here,  
your Spirit has blessed countless worshippers.

*All* **We give you thanks, O God.**

We have celebrated the Lord's Supper here  
and been nurtured by it through our journey in faith.

*All* **We give you thanks, O God.**

We have rejoiced here as believers have confessed faith  
in Christ.

*All* **We give you thanks, O God.**

Here we have baptised our children and mourned our dead.

*All* **We give you thanks, O God.**

As new families have been created through marriage,  
we, our parents, and our children have vowed here  
to love, honour, and cherish always.

*All* **We give you thanks, O God.**

From within these walls many have gone out to serve you  
in the world.

*All* **We give you thanks, O God.**

**All** As we go now from this house into a further journey of faith,  
**we give you thanks, O God, through Jesus Christ  
our Lord.  
Amen.**

or

[note: this might be led by multiple voices. The symbol “◇” indicates a proposed change of reader. May need to be adapted to fit your building and its contents!]

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!  
My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.  
Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest  
for herself,  
where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts,  
my King and my God.  
Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing  
your praise.  
Happy are those whose strength is in you.

(Psalm 84:1-5a)

- ◇ God of love, we give thanks for this building, which has been a home for us.
- ◇ We give thanks for these *pews/chairs*, and all the people who have gathered here through the generations.
- ◇ We give thanks for these walls, and all the prayers and hopes they have sheltered.

- ◇ We give thanks for the organ, and all the music and singing that have carried your people's praises in this place.
- ◇ We give thanks for the Communion table and kitchen counter, communion set and coffee cups, remembering with gratitude all the hospitality and fellowship shared here.
- ◇ We give thanks for the story books and crayons, and all the children who have passed through our toddler group and Sunday school, and been part of the life of this church.
- ◇ We give thanks for the pulpit and lectern, for the reading and preaching of your Word in this place, and all the ministers and leaders who have served here.
- ◇ We give thanks for the peace of this place. The silence it holds. The memories it holds. Your presence here with us.

(silence)

Faithful one: you make all things new.

In your eternal love, nothing that has been will ever be lost.

Comfort us in our grief for all that is ending.

In our fearfulness of change, centre and steady us.

For our regrets, may we know your forgiveness.

Give us courage and hope for the future.

*All* **Amen.**

or

# A Commendation and Committal into God's gentle keeping

All rise as they are able.

God of every good gift, we give thanks for the life of this congregation.

(at the font)

We give you thanks for the gift of faith, for those baptised here, who grew into faith through the loving kindness of ministers and elders, of Sunday School teachers and youth leaders.

(at the Table)

We give thanks for how you sustained your people,  
Lord Jesus, at this your table,  
giving yourself our nourishment and growth in grace,  
gathering us into your presence in the heavenly places,  
and sending us out strengthened for service.

(in the chancel)

We give thanks for couples who took their vows to love  
each other here  
for better and for worse, in sickness and in health.  
We give thanks for the love that renews and strengthens  
and for the grace it produces.  
We also give thanks for the second chances that you give  
your people  
when things go wrong and for the open loving witness of  
this congregation

in journeying with couples taking a second chance on love – even in the face of public hostility.

We give thanks for life's endings  
as we remember those consoled by the ministry of this  
church in death's darkest vale,  
where gentle love, the silent touch, and a calm presence  
meant so much to so many.

We give thanks too for those ordained to your service here  
as Elders and Ministers,  
each responding to your call to serve in this place  
and whose names we may never know.

(at lectern or in pulpit with Bible slowly taken out of the church)

We give thanks O God, for your Word  
proclaimed and enfleshed here in this place,  
faithfully preached in season and out of season,  
for how people responded to it and sanctified their communities.  
Now, we ask that you send forth Spirit  
as we take the Bible from this place,  
that you renew the face of the earth,  
that the witness of your disciples here will shine,  
that resources released for mission will be fruitful,  
that displaced members will find new homes  
and that, in all things, we continue to give you thanks.

All **Amen.**

# Liturgy of Closure

Synod Moderator or representative of the wider church

We give thanks to God for the ... Y ... years of Reformed witness in this place. We thank God for ... X ... United Reformed Church and its (Congregational/Presbyterian/Church of Christ) predecessors, for its members, friends and ministers, for the love, kindness and support shown over these years.

We ask forgiveness for the mistakes that we have made and we know that God's love will continue to surround us in the days to come.

*All* **We give thanks to God for all the faithful witness of this church.**

Congregation to stand

Do you, the members and friends of this church, release ... M ... from the duty of being of your Minister?

*All* **We do, with the help of God.**

Do you offer your encouragement and prayers for the continuing ministry of the (continuing pastorate or group)?

*All* **We do, with the help of God.**

On behalf of the wider church and the ... Z ... Synod of the United Reformed Church, I witness the words of thankfulness, blessing and release spoken today.

Let us pray

O God, we give you thanks for remembered times when we have shared the life of faith. We thank you for times that we have shared in worship, learning and service.

We pray that your Spirit will continue to guide your people (eg of the continuing pastorate) in the days to come. In Jesus' name.

All

**Amen.**

## **Statement of Closure**

Today we have celebrated with thanksgiving the life and work of the faith community of ... X ... United Reformed Church. It has served as a witness to God's presence for ... Y ... years. It has provided refuge, comfort, and challenges for God's people. It has served for generations the faithful people of this community.

The building, dedicated and named ... X ... United Reformed Church together with the land on which it stands, and all objects remaining in it, we now commend to other purposes.

We declare that as of ... X ... it is no longer the place of meeting of a congregation of The United Reformed Church.

## **Closing Prayer**

(for a church moving from one building to another)

O God, as in your great goodness you have blessed the many ministries carried on by this congregation in this building, so, now and in the days and years to come, we pray that you may bless greatly your many ministries in your ongoing Church.

Bless those persons who have worshipped in this building,  
and will now be worshipping in their new/shared building.  
As disciples of the risen Christ,  
may we be channels at all times of your steadfast love;  
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## Blessing

May the One who bought us to birth and in whose arms we die,  
give us grace, comfort, and joy.

May the One who, like a mother, nurtures the people with  
his own self,  
give us peace, balm, and healing.

May the One whose perfume we smell,  
whose embrace we feel, and whose comfort we seek,  
give us time, challenge, and perspective to heal and flourish.

And the blessing of Almighty God,  
Eternal Majesty, Enfleshed Word, Fire of Love,  
*or* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, now and evermore,

*All* **Amen.**

*or*

God remains with us, though we let go of our cherished place.  
God remains with us, though we find new congregations  
to call home.

God remains with us, this day and always.  
God is eternally for you and with you.

In the love of God the Father,

or In the love of God the Maker,

in the grace of God the Son

or in the grace of God the Word made flesh  
and in the peace of God the Spirit.

*All* **Amen.**

or

May the strength of God go with you,  
may you find the love of God waiting for you,  
may the peace of God keep you.

And may the strength, love and peace of God  
Author of all, living Word, and Voice of love within

or Father, Son and Holy Spirit

remain with you now and forever.

*All* **Amen.**

**URC Worship Additional Resources** to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: [www.urb.org.uk/worship-book](http://www.urb.org.uk/worship-book)

## Hymn Suggestions

	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Bless, and keep us, Lord	471			
Give thanks for life		736		
Great God, your love has called us here	339	484	499	
Great is thy faithfulness	96	153	51	200
Lord, for the years	603	159	470	428
Lord of all hopefulness	531	166	526	882
Now thank we all our God	72	182	81	486
The Church is wherever God's people are praising	583	522		
And art thou come with us to dwell	136			
We are marching in the light of God	555	516	483	954
God is working his purpose out	573	235		189
All people that on earth do dwell	712	63	1	20
Spirit of truth and grace		608		
Spirit of God come dwell within me		722		

*RS – Rejoice and Sing | CH4 – Church Hymnary 4 | StF – Singing the Faith | MP – Mission Praise*

Not in our hymn books:

- o God marks no endings, only new beginnings (tune: R&S 603, words: © 2006 Stainer & Bell Ltd)

# Acknowledgments

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2026 edition

Published by The United Reformed Church  
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT