

# COMMISSIONING TO SERVICE

Commissioning to Ministry within a Congregation  
Commissioning to Ministry Outside a Congregation  
Commissioning Delegates to a Council  
Additional Texts

In Baptism each Christian is called to discipleship and sent in service to the world. God also calls people to particular acts of service in the church and world: within the congregation, as teachers, trustees, musicians, or committee members; on behalf of the congregation, through its ministry in the local community; in the larger church, through service on denominational and ecumenical councils; and beyond the church, cooperating with others who work for evangelism, compassion, justice and peace, and care of creation. These kinds of vocation are appropriately confirmed in the Service for the Lord's Day, either as a response to the proclamation of the Word or as an act of sending. They may also be recognized in other services of worship.

(Directory for Worship, W-4.0301)

Every Christian, by virtue of being claimed in baptism as a disciple of Jesus Christ, has a ministry to perform in Christ's name. These range from a wide variety of tasks within the congregational life to many services beyond, as well as those responsibilities to which one may be elected.

## **Affirming Specific Ministries**

There are occasions in the life of the church, then, when it is appropriate to affirm certain specific ministries of individuals as extensions of the mission of the whole church. This affirmation makes it clear that these individuals receive the support and encouragement of all the people, as they carry out important and necessary tasks. It also establishes a relationship of responsibility and accountability between the congregation and the individual.

## **Flowing from Baptism**

These services of commissioning provide ways to acknowledge the baptismal ministries of individuals in the church as extensions of the church's ministry. Those being commissioned gather at the baptismal font or pool, which is filled with water, as a sign that what happens in these services rests firmly on the foundation of baptism. Those being commissioned reaffirm their faith as in baptism, and accept the responsibility of their

call to particular service. In a fashion similar to baptism, the congregation confirms God's call to them and promises support and encouragement in their ministry.

### **Different Gifts, One Mission**

The bond between congregation and individuals in service is set in its proper context. Early in each service the congregation rehearses the Great Ends of the Church. This is to celebrate the diverse gifts from God given to different people and woven into an intricate fabric of mission by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Using the options provided, this liturgy may be adapted for any of the following purposes:

#### ***Commissioning to Ministry within a Congregation***

This liturgy may be used to commission persons to various forms of professional or voluntary service within a congregation: educators, church musicians, parish associates, pastor nominating committees, church school teachers, choir members, trustees, small-group leaders, youth and children's advisers, and other persons who are called to particular leadership. When a presbytery has certified a Christian educator, this liturgy may be adapted for use by a congregation to recognize this achievement. When a presbytery has commissioned a ruling elder to pastoral service, this liturgy may be adapted to initiate this commission within a congregation. In the latter instance it is appropriate that a representative of the presbytery lead this service.

#### ***Commissioning to Ministry outside a Congregation***

This liturgy may be used by a congregation, a council, a seminary, or other church-related organization to commission persons to various forms of professional or voluntary service outside a congregation: community volunteers, mission workers, counselors, seminary faculty, chaplains, church administrative staff, representatives to church conferences or other events, and other forms of Christian calling. This liturgy may also be adapted to celebrate the ministry of the people of God in their chosen vocation and daily work. It is especially appropriate for representatives from the community agency, organization, or institution related to this commissioning to be invited to share in the leadership of this liturgy.

#### ***Commissioning Delegates to a Council***

This liturgy may be used by sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly to commission persons to various forms of elected service on other councils, on ecumenical councils, or to church boards or agencies. The worshiping body affirms the election of a delegate and recognizes that service as a fulfillment of baptismal calling, important to the life of the whole church.

# Services of Commissioning

*Ministry within a Congregation | Ministry outside a Congregation |  
Delegates to a Council*

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

Sentences of Scripture  
Hymn, Psalm, or Spiritual Song  
Call to Discipleship  
Commissioning Prayer  
Blessing and Charge

Commissioning would ordinarily be part of a complete Service for the Lord's Day, although this liturgy may be used alone. When included in a complete service, commissioning may follow the sermon and precede the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Alternately, the commissioning may be included in the sending, between the closing hymn and the blessing and charge; in this case, the hymn, psalm, or spiritual song is omitted and the blessing and charge are adapted to address the whole congregation.

*The presider and those to be commissioned gather at the baptismal font or pool.  
The font or pool should be filled with water.*

## SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE

*The presider addresses all present:*

As many of you as were baptized into Christ *Gal. 3:27–28*  
have clothed yourselves with Christ.

**There is no longer Jew or Greek,  
there is no longer slave or free,  
there is no longer male and female;  
for all are one in Christ Jesus.**

Lead a life worthy of the calling *Eph. 4:1–6*  
to which you have been called,  
making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit  
in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit,  
just as we were called to the one hope of our calling,  
**one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
one God and Father of all,  
who is above all and through all and in all.**

*Psalm 133 (1063; GTG 397, 398; PH 241; PS 137) or another hymn, psalm, or  
spiritual song may be sung.*

## CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

We are called by God  
to be the church of Jesus Christ,  
a sign in the world today  
of what God intends for all humankind.

*Book of Order, F-1.0304*

**The great ends of the Church are  
the proclamation of the gospel  
for the salvation of humankind;  
the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship  
of the children of God;  
the maintenance of divine worship;  
the preservation of the truth;  
the promotion of social righteousness;  
and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven  
to the world.**

*The presider continues:*

The call of Christ  
is to willing, dedicated discipleship.  
Our discipleship is a manifestation  
of the new life we enter through baptism.  
Discipleship is both a gift and a commitment,  
an offering and a responsibility.

*The presider or other appropriate person(s) shall relate the form(s) of service to  
which persons are being commissioned.*

*Those being commissioned may express their hope in accepting the call and  
commission.*

*The presider addresses those being commissioned:*

N. [and N.],  
the grace bestowed on you in baptism  
is sufficient for your calling  
because it is God's grace.  
By God's grace we are saved,  
and enabled to grow in the faith  
and to commit our lives in ways that serve Christ.

God has called you to particular service.  
Show your purpose by answering these questions.

Who is your Lord and Savior?  
**Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.**

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple,  
obeying his word and showing his love?  
**I will, with God's help.**

Do you welcome the responsibility of this service  
because you are determined to follow the Lord Jesus,  
to love neighbors,  
and to work for the reconciling of the world? **I do.**

Will you serve the people  
with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love,  
relying on God's mercy  
and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit?  
**I will, with God's help.**

*The leader addresses all present:*

***For Commissioning to Ministry within or outside a Congregation***

Do you, members of N. Church,  
confirm the call of God  
to N. [and N.]  
as \_\_\_\_\_  
in the service of Jesus Christ? **We do.**

Will you support and encourage *them* in this ministry? **We will.**

***For Commissioning Delegates to a Council***

Do we, members of N.,  
accept N. [and N.] as \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_,  
chosen by God through the voice of the church,  
to guide us in the way of Jesus Christ? **We do.**

Do we promise to support and encourage *them*  
as *they* seek to fulfill *their* responsibilities in this ministry?  
**We do.**

**COMMISSIONING PRAYER**

Faithful God, in baptism you claimed us;  
and by your Holy Spirit you are working in our lives,  
empowering us to live a life worthy of our calling.  
We thank you for leading N. [and N.] to this time and place.  
Establish *them* in your truth,  
and guide *them* by your Holy Spirit,  
that in your service *they* may grow  
in faith, hope, and love,  
and be (a) faithful disciple(s) of Jesus Christ,  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be honor and glory, now and forever.

*Other petitions appropriate to specific forms of congregational service (523) may be offered.*

*All may pray together:*

*For Commissioning to Ministry within or outside a Congregation*

Almighty God,  
in Jesus Christ you called disciples  
and, by the Holy Spirit,  
made them one church to serve you.  
Let your Spirit rule your church,  
so that we may be joined  
in love and service to Jesus Christ,  
who, having gone before us,  
is coming to meet us  
in the promise of your kingdom. Amen.

*For Commissioning Delegates to a Council*

Almighty God,  
in Jesus Christ you called disciples  
and, by the Holy Spirit,  
made them one church to serve you.  
Be with members of the  
[presbytery, synod, General Assembly, council, board, agency].  
Help them to welcome new things  
you are doing in the world  
and to respect old things you keep and use.  
In their deliberation,  
bring about what is best for us and for all people.  
As they meet, let your Spirit guide  
so that the whole church may be joined  
in love and service to Jesus Christ,  
who, having gone before us,  
is coming to meet us  
in the promise of your kingdom. Amen.

## BLESSING AND CHARGE

*The presider addresses those being commissioned:*

May the God of peace  
make you holy in every way,  
and keep your whole being,  
spirit, soul, and body,  
free from every fault  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**Alleluia! or Amen.**

*1 Thess. 5:23*

*It is appropriate for a deacon to give the charge, using this or other scripture:*

N. [and N.], you are commissioned to service  
as \_\_\_\_\_ .

Whatever you do, in word or deed,  
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,  
giving thanks to God through him.

*Col. 3:17*

**Amen. or Thanks be to God.**

*If included after the sermon, the service continues with a hymn, psalm, or spiritual song, with the prayers of the people, or with the celebration of the Eucharist.*

# Additional Texts

## PRAYERS FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS

### *For Candidates for Church Service*

God of prophets and apostles,  
you have chosen leaders to train your people  
in the way of Jesus Christ.

We thank you that in our day  
you are still claiming men and women  
for special work within the church.

As N. has dedicated *herself/himself* to you,  
let us pledge ourselves to *her/him*,  
so that, surrounded by affection and hope,  
*she/he* may grow in wisdom,  
mature in love,  
and become a faithful worker,  
approved by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### *For Teachers in the Church*

Almighty God,  
you have given your law to guide us in a life of love,  
and you have appointed teachers to interpret your will.  
Create in those who instruct your people  
a mind to study your word,  
and good understanding,  
so that we may all learn your truth  
and do it gladly;  
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Master. **Amen.**

### *For Church Administrators*

God of creation,  
you bring order out of chaos  
and set us in this world to do your will.  
Bless those who serve your cause  
as administrators in church offices.  
Confirm their dedication,  
that their love for you may show in diligence.  
Strengthen their compassion  
that they may represent your love  
to church members and strangers they encounter.  
May their work be appreciated by all  
as important to the ministry of Christ Jesus,  
our Lord and Savior. **Amen.**

*For Church Musicians and Artists*

- 1 God of majesty,  
whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven:  
Be with your servants who make art and music for your people,  
that we on earth may glimpse your beauty with joy,  
and be brought to the fulfillment of that hope of perfection  
which will be ours as we stand before your unveiled glory.  
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
  
- 2 God of life,  
you filled the world with beauty.  
Thank you for artists who see clearly,  
who with trained skill  
can paint, shape, or sing your truth to us.  
Keep them attentive  
and ready to applaud the wonder of your works,  
finding in the world signs of the love  
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**