

Study of Worship

Prepared by the Public Worship & Aids to Devotion Committee –2016
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Preamble

The worship of Almighty God by His people is an exercise in conversational dialog. God desires our worship and has prescribed the ways and means for which it is to be done. Such is the serious nature of the way in which we worship the Lord our God, it is written in the Scriptures regarding worship that we should neither add to it or take away from it (Deuteronomy 12:32).

The worship ordered by God is intended to portray His character of love and holiness. God intends our purification and sanctification in worship. He desires communion with His people and through the Word read and preached we acquire knowledge of Him and His Christ more intimately.

As God calls his people to worship with His word, we respond by joyfully singing Psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs acknowledging His worth and giving praise, glory and honour due His Name.

God continues the conversation with His people reminding them from His word of their sinful state and calling them to confession and repentance.

God responds from His word by song or speech with assurance of pardoning grace, offering comfort, reconciliation and peace through Christ our Lord.

It is appropriate for the people of God to respond by singing words of praise and thanksgiving for the salvation that has been won at the cross by the Saviour.

In continuing conversation with His people God invites us from His word to make our prayers and concerns known to Him, that He might address them in accordance with His perfect will and according to the promises of Jesus to hear them and grant them when prayed by faith in His Name. We do so believing in prayer as a means of grace given by Christ Jesus.

God further enjoins His saints to come before Him with His tithes and our offerings, acknowledging that all we possess belongs to the Lord and we are dependent upon Him for everything. God's people respond in worship and praise by taking up this collection and presenting it to God.

God's people may further respond with singing appropriate words of thanksgiving and anticipation of the hearing of God's Word.

God invites His saints to attend to His word by the reading selections of the Old and New Testaments which will be later expounded upon by the minister of the congregation for the purpose of their instruction and knowledge of God's nature and will for them in living the Christian life.

With praise in their hearts and resolve to heed the exhortations of the preached word, the people of God will respond in a song of praise and worship acknowledging the impact of grace and mercy in their lives.

Being satisfied with the sacrifice of the risen Christ Jesus; and with the cleansing of His people from sin through their confession and repentance; and with sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit through the preached word, the Father

declares his blessing on the people of God from the Scriptures to their comfort, assurance, and grace. [Back to Top](#)

The Principles and Elements of Public Worship

1-1. The Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and as such, the principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible, and from no other source. We must not take on worship practices that have originated from cultural influences.

The Scriptures forbid the worshipping of God by images, or in any other way not appointed in His Word. They require the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God appoints in His Word (Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) Q&A 50, 51; Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 21.1-2, 6).

1-2. A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other, but before all else, a meeting of the triune God with His chosen people. God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the Divine omnipresence but, much more intimately, as the faithful Covenant Saviour. *The Lord Jesus Christ said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).* It is proper and fitting to refer to the second person of the Trinity as Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son (of God), the Lord. This makes clear acknowledgement that the Jesus born of the Virgin Mary, taking to himself our human flesh is not only of our flesh, but the incarnate Son of God whom we worship and adore as the second person of the eternal Godhead.

1-3. The focus and end of public worship is always the glory of God. His people should engage in all component parts with the view to His glory. Public worship has as its aim the building of Christ's Church by the perfecting of the saints and the addition to its membership of such as are being saved -- all to the glory of God. Through public worship on the Lord's day Christians should learn to serve God all the days of the week in their every activity, remembering, *whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).*

1-4. Public worship is only Christian when those worshipping recognize that Christ is the only Mediator by whom they can come unto God, when they honour Christ as the head of the church, who rules over public worship, and when their worship is an expression of their faith in Christ and of their love for Him.

1-5. *Jesus said, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23).* All attempts at introducing worldly or cultural aspects to worship, whether modern or historical must stand condemned. Neither shall

the worship of God be reduced to the performance of symbolic religious acts that are devoid of any connection to the Spirit of God and are done hypocritically. The outward forms of public worship only have value when they serve to express the inner reverence of worshippers and their sincere devotion to the true and living God. And only those whose hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit are capable of such reverence and devotion.

1-6. The Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed no fixed forms for public worship but, in the interest of life and power in worship, He has given His Church a large measure of liberty in this matter. However, we must not forget that there is true liberty only where the rules of God's Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is. We are reminded that all things must be done decently and in order and that God's people should serve Him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness. From its beginning to its end a service of public worship should be characterized by that simplicity which is an evidence of sincerity and by that beauty and dignity which are a manifestation of holiness. Orders of worship should be carefully planned and thought through in their preparation and participants trained and practiced in the orderly worship of God.

"But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

(1 Corinthians 14:39–40 NIV)

1-7. Public worship must be distinguished from private worship. In public worship God is served by His saints as His covenant people, united in the body of Christ. For this reason, covenant children should not be discouraged from their presence in worship so far as possible, along with adults.

"But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these"

(Luke 18:16 NIV).

For the same reason, no favouritism may be shown to anyone who attends public worship. Nor may any member of the church presume to exalt themselves above others as though they were more spiritual. Elders and worship leaders should not be exalted over others. They minister to the body of Christ as servants.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)

1-8. It is fitting for all God's people not only to come into His presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of His perfect holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness. Suitable preparation should be made in the day and hours before gathering public worship in anticipation of meeting with a holy God by planning ahead for the Sabbath e.g. preparing meals ahead of time so you don't have to work on Sunday, ensuring there is fuel in the automobile to get to church, that you retire early enough in the evening that you might waken refreshed for church services on the Sabbath etc.

Additionally, we are called *"to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise"* (Psalm 100:4) for the great salvation which He has so graciously provided for us through his only begotten Son and applied to them by the Holy Spirit.

1-9. The Bible teaches that the following are proper elements or components of a proper worship service:

1. call of God to come and worship

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

(Psalms 100:1–5 NIV)

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23–24 NIV)

2. confession of sin

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem.

Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.” (Psalms 51:1–19 NIV)

““But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”

(Luke 18:13 NIV)

““Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”” (Matthew 3:2 NIV)

““The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!””

(Mark 1:15 NIV)

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,” (Acts 3:19 NIV)

3. assurance of faith and forgiveness
“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19–22 NIV)
4. reading of Holy Scripture,
“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” (1 Timothy 4:13 NIV)
“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.” (Revelation 1:3 NIV)
5. singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,
“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16 NIV)
6. the offering of prayer,
“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” (1 Timothy 2:1–2 NIV)
7. the preaching of the Word,
“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” (2 Timothy 4:2 NIV)
8. the presentation of tithes and offerings,
ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness. (1 Chronicles 16:29 NIV)
“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:41–44 NIV)
9. confessing the faith,
“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” (Romans 10:9–10 NIV)
10. observing the Sacraments,
“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38–39 NIV)

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20 NIV)

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

(1 Corinthians 11:23–26 NIV)

11. on special occasions taking oaths and vows,

“When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”

(Numbers 30:2 NIV)

““Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:33–37 NIV)

12. the charge to the congregation,

““Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”” (Joshua 24:14–15 NIV)

“I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism.” (1 Timothy 5:21 NIV)

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24–25 NIV)

13. God’s blessing on His people

*“The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.”*

(Numbers 6:24–26 NIV)

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14 NIV)

“May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham.” (Genesis 28:4 NIV)

14. worshipping God in fellowship

“Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.” (Nehemiah 8:12 NIV)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42–47 NIV)

1-10. It is God who determines how it is that His people worship Him. We are not to deviate from the commands concerning His worship and prescribed parts thereof. *“See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.”* (Deuteronomy 12:32 NIV). We are not to introduce new and different elements of worship not commanded by God and include them in any worship liturgy. This is commonly called the *Regulative Principle of Worship*.

However, we must distinguish between God’s commands in the components of worship, and that of the ways and means by which we accomplish them. We must not take on worship principles or components that have originated from within any given culture. We must instead practice our culture-free worship principles within the confines of our culture. The worship of God will often differ from culture to culture and from church to church in terms of the expression and creativity, and yet still comprise the same God ordained components of worship.

For example, one congregation may choose to use an organ to accompany congregational singing, while another might choose to use a contemporary band. The former may choose to use a hymnbook, the latter using contemporary music displayed through projection devices. Some churches may use choirs to lead the singing, while others may use song leaders. One might have the choir sing a Scriptural call to worship, while others might just read a passage from Scripture. A church may choose to use a responsive reading for their confession of sin, while another church has a time of silence before the minister leads the congregation in corporate prayer. All of these ways of expression are appropriate before the Lord when done with genuine service and worship of the heart...but the components of worship never change and are always included in some way. The exceptions are baptisms, which are occasional by nature and the Lord’s Supper, which may be celebrated only occasionally. All other elements should be present in every service. [Back to Top](#)

The Sanctification of the Lord's Day

2-1. "The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to himself." (See WSC Q&A 58; WCF 21.7-8).

2-2. God commanded His Old Testament people to keep holy the last day of the week, but He sanctified the first day as the Sabbath by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. For this reason the church of the new dispensation has from the time of the apostles kept holy the first day of the week as the Lord's Day.

"On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit (Revelation 1:10a NIV)

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." (1 Corinthians 16:2 NIV)

2-3. It is the duty of every person to remember the Lord's day; and to prepare for it before its approach. All worldly business should be so ordered, and all duties deferred as can be, so that there may be no hindrance to sanctifying the Sabbath, as the Holy Scriptures require.

2-4. The whole day is to be kept holy to the Lord; and to be employed in the public and private exercises of religion. Therefore, it is requisite, that there be a holy resting, all the day, from unnecessary labours; and an abstaining from those recreations which may be lawful on other days; and also, as much as possible, from such thoughts and conversation as would be usual and ordinary during the rest of the week.

"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD'S holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Isaiah 58:13-14 NIV)

2-5. The needs and affairs of individuals and families should be so arranged beforehand in order that other persons might not be kept from their public worship of God, or hindered from also sanctifying the Sabbath.
(Nehemiah 13:15-22 NIV)

2-6. Before attending public worship, every person and family should take care to approach God, by secret and private prayer, for themselves and others, and especially for the assistance of God to their minister. They should pray for God's blessing upon his ministry, the reading and preaching of the Scriptures, and a holy examination and meditation of participants as they prepare for communion with God in his public ordinances.

2-7. It is beneficial and desirable for the time not used for public worship to be spent in prayer, in devotional reading, and especially in the study of the Scriptures, meditation, catechism instruction, godly conversation on spiritual

topics, the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and holy resting. Recalling the teaching of Jesus that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, activities such as visiting the sick, relieving the poor, teaching one another, and other such duties of love and mercy are also appropriate.

“Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shrivelled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shrivelled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.” (Mark 3:1–5 NIV). [Back to Top](#)

The Ordering of Public Worship

3-1. When the congregation is to meet for public worship, people (having prepared their hearts beforehand) should all join together; not absenting themselves from the public ordinances through negligence, or to meet in smaller private and exclusive groups instead. *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25).*

3-2. It is important for everyone to be punctual, so that all are present at the beginning to unite with one heart in all the parts of public worship. And it is important that they stay until after the blessing is pronounced at the conclusion of the service.

3-3. Everyone should be encouraged to be seated well in time for the service to begin, in a decent and reverent manner. It is good for them to engage in a silent prayer for a blessing upon themselves, the minister, and all present, as well as upon those who are unable to attend worship.

3-4. All who attend public worship should come in a spirit of reverence and godly fear, refraining from any conduct unbecoming to the place and occasion. Since the family, as ordained by God, is the basic institution in society, and God in the Covenant graciously deals with us, not just as individuals but also as families, it is important and desirable that families worship together. [Back to Top](#)

The Call of God To Come And Worship

4-1. It is God who calls and saves us and the Lord God calls all his people to come and worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. The call to worship comes from a variety of Scriptural sources the minister or appointed worship leader may use. The gathering of God’s people is not limited to a building or other “sacred space” as the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it. God’s call for His people to come and

worship brings with it the understanding of preparation beforehand of each worshipper, readying themselves to come before the Lord God in the communion and fellowship of His saints.

4-2. The minister or appointed worship leader should use appropriate Scripture texts that enjoin God's people to come and worship Him. These texts will usually include the imperative forms of the biblical language. [Back to Top](#)

Confession of Sins

5-1. Having been called into the presence of God, people must realise the nature of a holy God compared to their own sinful natures. The Lord God calls His saints to confess their sins and be cleansed by the infinitely precious blood of the Lamb. This can be done in a number of ways using Scriptural confessions, form confessions, prayers of confession, or even songs and hymns.

5-2. Confession of sins should regularly have a national and local aspect, and most certainly a focus on an individual's personal and corporate sins. Recognition should be given of the finished work of the Saviour Jesus Christ on the Cross as the payment required of the Father for ours and the sin of the world. Enjoining the continuing presence and work of the Holy Spirit in us to recreate us to be more like Jesus is encouraged. [Back to Top](#)

The Assurance Of Pardon

6-1. Prayers for confession of sin are often done separately. When completed, an important component of worship involves the minister speaking as the mouthpiece of God and using Scripture giving the congregation of saints an assurance of God's pardoning grace in Christ Jesus. There is great spiritual value in letting people know the import of the Gospel's grace in their lives and the life of the congregation.

6-2. The assurance of pardon also provides another avenue for the proclamation of the Gospel and the evangelism of those not yet in the Kingdom of Christ Jesus. [Back to Top](#)

The Public Reading of the Holy Scriptures

7-1. The public reading of the Holy Scriptures is performed by someone authorised to do so by the Church, as God's servant. Through it God speaks most directly to the congregation, even more directly than through the sermon. The reading of the Scriptures is to be distinguished from the responsive reading of certain portions of Scripture by the leader and the congregation. In the former God addresses His people; in the latter God's people give expression in the words of Scripture to their contrition, adoration, gratitude and other holy sentiments. The psalms of Scripture are especially appropriate for responsive reading. (See WCF 21.5) [Back to Top](#)

7-2. The reading of the Holy Scriptures in the congregation is a part of the public worship of God and should be done by the minister or some other appointed believer.

7-3. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be read from a good and suitable translation, in the current language of the people, that all may hear and understand. (See WCF 1; WLC Q&A 3-6)

7-4. How large any portion of Scripture to be read during a service is left to the discretion of every minister; and he may, when he thinks it expedient, expound any part of what is read; always having regard to the time of the service as a whole, that neither reading, singing, praying, preaching, nor any other ordinance, be disproportionate such that their importance is minimised or impoverished; nor should the reading of the whole Scripture be rendered too short, or so long that it becomes tedious to the hearers. [Back to Top](#)

The Singing of Psalms and Hymns

8-1. Praising God through the medium of music is a duty and a privilege. Therefore, the singing of hymns and psalms and the use of musical instruments should have an important part in public worship.

“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,” (Ephesians 5:19 NIV)

“Sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob! Begin the music, strike the tambourine, play the melodious harp and lyre.” (Psalms 81:1–2 NIV)

8-2. In singing the praises of God, we are to sing in the spirit of worship, with understanding in our hearts.

“So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.”

(1 Corinthians 14:15 NIV)

8-3. It is recommended that Psalms be sung along with hymns and spiritual songs of the church, but that caution be observed in the selection of the latter, that they be true to the Word. Hymns and spiritual songs should have the note of praise, or thanksgiving, or supplication, or contrition; and be, as far as practicable, in accord with the spirit of the sermon.

8-4. The leadership in song is left to the judgment of the Session, who should give careful thought to ensure the Christian commitment and character of those asked to lead in this part of worship, and the vocalists or singing of a choir should not be allowed to displace congregational singing.

8-5. The proportion of the time of public worship given to praise is left to the judgment of the minister, and the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs by the congregation should be encouraged. [Back to Top](#)

Public Prayer

9-1. It is appropriate to begin public worship with a call of God for his people to come and worship him, such as are found in the Scriptures. This may be followed by a doxology and/or a short prayer, in which the minister or appointed leader shall lead the people, humbly adoring the infinite majesty of the living God, expressing a sense of our distance from Him as creatures, and our unworthiness as sinners; and humbly imploring His gracious presence, the assistance of His Holy Spirit in the duties of His worship, and His acceptance of us through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The minister or leader may conclude this prayer with the Lord's Prayer in which all may unite (See WCF 21.3-4). Examples of different kinds of prayers may be found on our website [here](#). You can download it and put on your iBook or Kindle device [here](#).

9-2. At some point in every public worship service there should be a time for full and comprehensive prayer. Such prayer may include the following, but may be done quite separately:

a. Adoring the glory and perfections of God, as they are made known to us in the works of creation, in the conduct of Providence, and in the clear and full revelation made of Himself in His written words;

b. Giving thanks to Him for all His mercies of every kind, general and particular, spiritual and temporal, common and special; above all, for Christ Jesus, His unspeakable gift, the hope of eternal life through Him, and for the presence, mission and work of the Holy Spirit;

c. Making humble confession of sin, both original and actual, acknowledging, and endeavouring to lead the heart of every worshipper with a deep sense of the evil of all sin, as such, as being a departure from the living God; and also taking a particular and affecting view of the various fruits which proceed from this root of bitterness; as sins against God, our neighbour and ourselves; sins in thought, in word, and deed; sins secret and presumptuous as well as open and known; sins accidental and habitual; and sins of failure to do what is good and right. Also, for sins made more significant and heinous because of prior knowledge or state of grace; from distinguishing mercies; from valuable privileges; from breach of vows, etc. (See WLC 151);

d. Making earnest supplication for the pardon of sin, and peace with God, through the blood of the atonement, with all its important and beneficial fruits; for the Spirit of sanctification, and abundant supplies of the grace that is necessary to the discharge of our duty; for support and comfort, under all the trials to which we are liable, as we are sinful and mortal; and for all temporal mercies that may be necessary in our passage through this valley of tears; always remembering to view them as flowing in the channel of covenant love, and intended to be subservient to the preservation and progress of the spiritual life—namely, our sanctification by the Spirit of Christ;

e. Pleading from every principle warranted in Scripture; from our own necessity; the all-sufficiency of God; the merit and intercession of our Saviour; and the glory of God in the comfort and blessedness of His people;

f. Intercession and petition for others, including the whole of humanity; for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh; for the peace, purity, and extension of the Church of God; for ministers and missionaries in all lands; for all who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for the particular church then assembled, and all other churches associated in one body with it; for the sick, dying, and bereaved; for the poor and destitute; for strangers, for prisoners, the aged and the young; for those who travel; for the community in which the church is situated; for civil rulers, and for whatever else may seem to be necessary or suitable to the occasion.

The prominence given each of these topics must be left to the discretion of the minister or appointed leader and may be used at various times during a given service of worship.

9-3. Ordinarily there should be prayer after the sermon relating to the subject that has been treated in the discourse; and all other public prayers should be appropriate to the occasion.

9-4. Ministers are not to be confined to fixed forms of prayer for public worship, yet it is the duty of the minister or appointed leaders, previous to entering upon the office, to prepare and qualify themselves for this part of their work, as well as for preaching. They should, by a thorough acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, by the study of the best writers on prayer, by meditation, and by a life of communion with God, endeavour to acquire both the spirit and the gift of prayer. Moreover, when ministers or appointed leaders are to offer prayer in public worship, they should compose their spirit, and so order their thought, that they may perform this duty with dignity and propriety, and with profit to the worshippers, lest they disgrace this important service by coarse, undignified, careless, irregular or extravagant expressions.

9-5. Ministers and other appointed worship leaders would do well to include the frequent use of the Lord's Prayer in public worship as a perfect model for how to properly pray in a worship service. While the prayer itself has great value and worth, it is also a model for all prayers as regards form and content in training and discipleship of the saints. (See the WSC Q&A 98-107; WLC Q&A 178-196; WCF 11.3-4).

9-6. All prayer is to be offered in the language of the people.

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The Preaching of the Word

10-1. The preaching of the Word is an ordinance of God for the salvation of men. Serious attention should be paid to the manner in which it is done. The minister or appointed preacher should apply himself to it with diligence and prove himself a *"worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15 NIV)

10-2. The subject of a sermon should come from some selection of Scripture text—large or small, or a collection verses from Scripture. The goal or object of a sermon is to explain, defend and apply some part of the system of divine truth; or to point out the nature, and state the bounds and obligation, of some duty. A sermon text should not be merely a motto or simply a jumping off place for sermon with no further engagement of the text, but should fairly contain the doctrine proposed to be handled. It is proper also that large portions of Scripture be sometimes expounded in order to gain an overview of the writers' intent, for the instruction of the people in the meaning and use of the sacred Scriptures. Expository preaching through books of the Bible is a preferred way of preaching, though of course such programs can be interspersed with topical preaching, special series or responses to particular news affairs and events affecting the community.

10-3. Preaching requires much study, meditation, and prayer, and ministers or appointed preachers should prepare their sermons with care. They should not indulge in loose, extemporary harangues, nor serve God with something that has cost them no effort. Neither is a sermon simply a lecture divorced from the immediate life of the congregation. Preaching is actually connecting the word to the congregation, hopefully without the preacher getting in the way. A major requirement for preaching is that the preacher (in the ordinary course of affairs) knows his people through visitation, participation in Bible study, family upsets, and the like. In other words, preachers must on the one hand exhort and admonish and yet with the other, give hope and comfort from the Scriptures. They should, however, keep to the simplicity of the Gospel, and express themselves in language that can be understood by all. They should also adorn their lives by the Gospel that they preach, and be examples to believers in word and deed.

10-4. As a primary design of public ordinances is to unite the people in acts of common worship of the most high God, ministers or appointed preachers should be careful not to make their sermons so long as to interfere with or exclude the important duties of prayer and praise, but should preserve a just proportion in the various parts of public worship.

10-5. By way of application of the sermon the minister or appointed preacher may pray for, expect and urge his hearers (whether by commandment or invitation) to repent of their sins, and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, and confess him publicly before gathered believers. This involves exhortation and admonishment as well as hope and comfort being given from the pulpit.

10-6. Ministers and Moderators of Charges (or their representatives) must take care to ensure that any appointed or guest preacher has received appropriate and adequate training in order to properly deliver the Word of God to gathered worshippers. [Back to Top](#)

The Worship of God with Gifts & Offerings

11-1. The Holy Scriptures teach that God is the owner of all persons and all things and that we are but stewards of both life and possessions; that God's ownership and our stewardship should be acknowledged; that this acknowledgement should take the form, in part, of giving generously to the work of the Lord through the Church of Jesus Christ, thus worshipping the Lord with our possessions; and that the remainder should be used as becomes Christians.

11-2. It is both a privilege and a duty, plainly directed in the Bible, to make regular, weekly, systematic and proportionate offerings for the support of God's Kingdom work both in the local church and in the wider church; as well as for the propagation of the Gospel in our own and foreign lands, and for the relief of the poor. This should be done freely, cheerfully and with compulsion, as an exercise of grace and an act of worship, and at such time during the service as may be expedient.

11-3. The offering of our regular sacrifices must not come from that which cost us nothing, and must include the sacrifice to God of ourselves, our time, our talents as well as our money. In all of this we ourselves become living sacrifices to God.

11-4. It is appropriate that when the Lord's tithes and our offerings are collected, the minister or appointed worship leader dedicate them by prayer. [Back to Top](#)

Confessing the Faith

12-1. It is proper for the congregation of God's people to regularly and publicly confess their faith, using creeds or confessions that are true to the Word, such as the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the Westminster Standards. Such confessions remind God's people of basic doctrines essential to the faith of all Christians and help to form Christian identity, unity and connection in Christ. (See WFC 22)

12-2. It is proper from time to time for the minister or appointed worship leader to include the reading and meditation on all or parts of the Law of God as given in the Scriptures. These would ordinarily be the Ten Commandments read aloud, as well as the summary of the Law given by Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and our Father God can only be understood and appreciated when contrasted with God's holy Law.

12-3. Confessing our faith and the reading of God's Law are especially useful during times when one or both of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are conducted for the edification and confirmation of the saints of God.

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The Administration of Baptism

The Baptism of Infants and Children

13-1. Baptism is not to be unnecessarily delayed, however, nor is it to be administered in any case, by just any private person; but by an ordained minister of Christ, called to be the steward of the mysteries of God.

13-2. It is not to be privately administered, even by a minister, but rather in the presence of the congregation under the supervision of the Session.

13-3. After previous notice is given to the minister, the child to be baptised is to be presented, by one or both the parents, or some other responsible person (lawful guardian, caretaker), signifying the desire that the child be baptised.

13-4. Before baptism, the minister is to use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this sacrament, showing,

- a. that it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ;
- b. that it is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of our engrafting into Christ, and of our union with Him, of remission of sins, regeneration, adoption, and life eternal;
- c. that the water in baptism represents and signifies both the blood of Christ, which takes away all guilt of sin, original and actual; and the sanctifying virtue of the Spirit of Christ against the dominion of sin, and the corruption of our sinful nature;
- d. that baptizing by sprinkling or washing with water, signifies the cleansing from sin by the blood and for the merit of Christ, together with the mortification of sin, and rising from sin to newness of life, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ;
- e. that the promise is made to believers and their children;
 - i. that the children of believers have an interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it, and to the outward privileges of the church, under the Gospel, no less than the children of Abraham in the time of the Old Testament;
 - ii. the substance of the Covenant of Grace for children being the same as it is for their parents or persons presenting them;

iii. and the grace of God, and the consolation of believers, more plentiful than before;

f. that the Son of God admitted little children into His presence, embracing and blessing them, saying, *“for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”* (Mark 10:14).

g. that children by Baptism, are solemnly received into the bosom of the visible Church, distinguished from the world, and them that are without, and united with believers; and that all who are baptised in the name of Christ, do renounce, and by their Baptism are bound to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh;

h. that they are federally holy before Baptism, and therefore are they baptised *For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.* (1 Corinthians 7:14);

i. that the inward grace and virtue of Baptism is not tied to that very moment of time wherein it is administered; that the fruit and power of said Baptism reaches to the whole course of our life; and that outward baptism is not so necessary, that if not received, the infant is in danger of damnation;

j. by virtue of being children of believing parents they are, because of God's covenant ordinance, made members of the church in Baptism, but this is not sufficient to make them continue members of the Church. When they have reached the age of discretion, they become subject personally to obligations of the covenant: faith, repentance and obedience. They then make public confession of their faith in Christ, or become covenant breakers, and subject to the discipline of the Church.

13-5. In these or the like instructions, the minister is to use his own liberty and godly wisdom, as the ignorance or errors in the doctrine of Baptism, and the edification of the people, shall require. (See WSC Q&A 91-95; WLC Q&A 161-167, 176-177; WCF 27 & 28)

13-6. He is also to admonish all that are present to look back to their Baptism, to repent of their sins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; and to improve and make right use of their Baptism and of the covenant sealed between God and their soul.

13-7. He is to exhort the parent(s) to consider the great mercy of God to them and their child; to bring up the child in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to let them know the danger of God's wrath to themselves and the child, should they be negligent; requiring their solemn promise for the performance of this duty.

13-8. The minister is also to exhort the parent(s) to the careful performance of their duty, requiring:

- a. that they teach the child to read the Word of God as they are able to do so;
- b. that they instruct him or her in the principles of our holy religion, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, an excellent summary of which we have in the *Confession of Faith* (as read in light of the Declaratory Statement), and in the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* of the Westminster Assembly, which are to be recommended to them as adopted by the Church, for their direction and assistance, in the discharge of this important duty;
- c. that they pray with and for the child;
- d. that they set an example of right conduct and godliness before him or her; and endeavour, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up their child in the nurture and discipline of the Lord.

13-9. The prescribed service for the baptism of infants is found at:

[Order One](#)

[Order Two](#)

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The Admission of Persons to Sealing Ordinances

14-1. Believers' children within the visible Church, and especially those dedicated to God in Baptism, are non-communing members under the care of the church. They are to be taught to love God, and to obey and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. When they are able to understand the Gospel, they should be earnestly reminded that they are members of the church by birthright, and that it is their duty and privilege personally to accept Christ, to confess Him before men, and to seek admission to the Lord's Supper.

14-2. The time when young persons come to understand the Gospel cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the discernment of the Session, whose office it is to judge, after careful examination, the qualifications of those who apply for admission to sealing ordinances.

14-3. When unbaptised persons apply for admission into the church, they shall, ordinarily, after giving satisfaction with respect to their knowledge and piety, make a public profession of their faith, in the presence of the congregation, and thereupon be baptised.

14-4. It is recommended, as edifying and proper, that baptised persons, when admitted by the Session to the Lord's Supper, make a public profession of their faith in the presence of the congregation. But in all cases, there should be a clear recognition of their previous relation to the church as baptised members.

14-5. The time having come for the making of a public profession, and those who have been approved by the Session having taken their places in the presence of the congregation, the minister may conduct the appropriate services found here:

[Adult Baptism 1st Order](#)

[Adult Baptism 2nd Order](#)

[Adult Admission 1st Order](#)

[Adult Admission 2nd Order](#)

14-6. Persons received from other churches by letters of transfer as well as those being received by reaffirmation of faith should give a testimony of their Christian experience to the Session. Their names are to be announced to the congregation with a recommendation of them to its Christian confidence and affection after the appropriate service found here:

[Admission From Other Churches](#)

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The Administration of the Lord's Supper

15-1. The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is to be observed frequently; the stated times to be determined by the Session of each congregation, as it may judge most for edification.

15-2. Those who do not understand the meaning application of this sacrament, or who are unrepentantly or ignorantly engaged in a sinful lifestyle are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

15-3. It is proper that public notice should be given to the congregation, at least the Lord's Day before the administration of this ordinance. It is helpful if either then, or at some other appropriate time that the Session ensure that people are instructed in its nature, and a due preparation for it, that all may come in a suitable manner to this holy feast.

15-4. On the day of the observance of the Lord's Supper, the minister shall show:

a. That this is an ordinance of Christ by reading the words of institution, either from one of the Evangelists, or from 1 Corinthians 11. He may explain and apply whichever passage he thinks expedient;

b. That it is to be observed in remembrance of Christ, to show forth His death till He comes; that it is of inestimable benefit, to strengthen His people against sin; to support them under troubles; to encourage and quicken them in duty; to inspire them with love and zeal; to increase their faith, and holy resolution; and to beget peace of conscience, and comfortable hopes of eternal life;

c. That it is a participation in the benefits of his death and resurrection so that in eating the bread and drinking the wine we are fed spiritually with the body and blood of Christ.

“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” (1 Corinthians 10:16–17 NIV)

15-5. Since, by our Lord's appointment, this Sacrament sets forth the Communion of Saints, the minister, at the discretion of the Session, before the observance begins, may either invite all those who profess to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and are communicants in good standing in any gospel centred church, to participate in the ordinance; or may invite those who have been approved by the Session, after having given indication of their desire to participate. It is proper also to give a special invitation to non-communicants to remain during the service even if they are not partaking in the Supper while, at the same time, explain why they should not take the elements; that the Lord's Supper is for believers only.

15-6. The table on which the elements are placed should be adequately furnished with bread and wine. The communicants should be seated in orderly fashion around it or before it, with the elders in a convenient place together to assist. The minister should then set the elements apart by prayer and thanksgiving. Then in accordance with the Book of Common Order found [here](#) the minister and Session elders will distribute the elements in the prescribed manners.

15-7. During the Lord's Supper believers should act personally in all their covenanting with the Lord. Properly, a part of the time during in the distribution of the elements should be spent in silent communion, thanksgiving, intercession and prayer.

15-8. The minister may, in a few words, put the communicants in mind:

- i. of the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, held forth in this sacrament;
- ii. and of their obligation to be the Lord's;
- iii. and may exhort them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called;
- iv. and, as they have professed to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, that they be careful to walk in him, and to maintain good works.

It may not be improper for the minister to give a word of exhortation also to those who have been only spectators, reminding them of their duty, stating their sin and danger, by living in disobedience to Christ, in neglecting this holy ordinance; and calling upon them to be earnest in making preparation for attending upon it at the next time of its celebration.

The minister should then pray and give thanks to God, concluding that portion of the Lord's Supper.

An offering for the poor or other sacred purpose is appropriate in connection with this service, and may be made at such time as shall be ordered by the Session.

At the conclusion of the service let a psalm or hymn be sung, and the congregation dismissed with some Gospel benediction.

15-9. Other formats of service may be found here:

[1st Order](#)

[2nd Order](#)

[3rd Order](#)

15-10. As past custom has been found in many parts of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the minister and Session Elders should ensure that our congregations are taught and instructed in their spiritual preparation for the Lord's Supper before the celebration of the Sacrament. (See WSC Q&A 91-93, 96-97, WLC Q&A 161-164, 168-177, WCF 27 & 29)

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The Solemnization of Marriage

16-1. Marriage is a divine institution though not a sacrament, nor peculiar to the Church of Christ. As a Creation Ordinance, it is proper that every commonwealth, for the good of society, make laws to regulate marriage, which all citizens are bound to obey.

16-2. Christians should marry in the Lord. Therefore, it is fitting that their marriage be solemnized by a lawful minister, that special instruction be given them, and suitable prayers offered, when they enter into this relation.

16-3. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, in accordance with the Word of God.

16-4. The parties should be of such years of discretion as to be capable of making their own choice; and if they be underage, or live with their parents, the consent of the parents or others, under whose care they are, should be previously obtained, and well certified to the minister in accordance with all local, state and federal laws before he proceeds to solemnize the marriage.

16-5. Parents should neither compel their children to marry contrary to their inclinations, nor deny their consent without just and important reasons.

16-6. Marriage is of a public nature. The welfare of civil society, the happiness of families, and the credit of Christianity are deeply dependent on it. Therefore, the purpose of marriage should be sufficiently published at a proper time previous to the solemnization to it. It is enjoined on all ministers to be careful that, in this matter, they do not transgress either the laws of God or the laws of the community. And that they may not destroy the peace and comfort of

families, ministers should be assured that, with respect to the parties applying to them, no just objections lie against their marriage.

16-7. The minister should keep a proper register in accordance with the church and community laws, of the names of all persons whom he marries, and of the time of their marriage, for the perusal of all whom it may concern.

16-8. Marriage services and vows may be found here:

[Guiding Principles](#)

[Simple Order](#)

[Extended Order](#)

[Traditional Order](#)

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God's Blessing Upon His People

17-1. The blessing of God is desired by all of God's people as approval of the Father upon His children. While we seek it in earnest, the blessing of the Lord God comes upon His people when He is satisfied in the work of His son Jesus on behalf of His people. In a service of worship where there has been confession of sins, repentance, instruction in the word and joyful response by the saints, God is pleased to pronounce his gracious and benevolent blessing upon his people with all that it entails regarding His promise to dwell with them, justify them in Christ Jesus, and work in them by His Spirit such that they become like Jesus.

17-2. God's "good word" or "benediction" is not so much a prayer as an announcement of the blessing of God restoring people their rightful place as heirs and co-heirs with Christ Jesus. The saints may lift up their heads and hearts in gladness in receiving God's blessing at the end of a worship service.

17-3. It is preferable that ministers or appointed worship leaders use appropriate Scripture verses invoking the blessing of God, instead of making up their own. [Back to Top](#)

Fellowshipping With The Saints

18-1. All of life is worship of the Lord God. His worship is not limited to brief periods of time during a Sabbath service, but extends, and is ongoing, into the day and week ahead. The gathering of the saints together for meals and fellowship continues the worship of God in less formal constructs...but no less important as we confess our sins one to another, read the Scriptures and pray together, and serve one another with our spiritual gifts and acts of service and charity.

18-2. Notwithstanding the above, and because Sunday worship affords a great opportunity when most in the congregation are together, it is appropriate for the saints to remain for a time of refreshment and continuing blessing following formal services of worship as is appropriate. Relaxed conversation over refreshments between members of the body of Christ will often reveal needs that

can be responded to in prayer, godly advice and encouragement and, if needed referred to the Deacons or other appointed mercy ministry teams for follow up.

18-3. Fellowshiping regularly with the saints that form the local body of Christ enriches the life of every believer as they come into contact with the spiritual gifts of others who may minister to them, and to whom they in turn may minister with their own spiritual gifts. Camaraderie in Christ will establish between brothers and sisters in Christ certain levels of accountability, spiritual growth and confidence in living the Christian life.

18-4. Scripture is also clear that believers are to enjoy the benefits of fellowship through informal times of spiritual reflection and sanctified social interaction as those identified as God's people to increase in mutual love and respect and the unity in Christ that devolves from that. However, it is the presence of God through Christ, both in each individual and amongst those believers gathered as a congregation, that is the impetus to Christian fellowship by the Spirit's power. Without Christ's presence, any human gathering is lifeless, lacking as it does, any eternal purpose and benefit. [Back to Top](#)

The Visitation of the Sick

19-1. The power of the prayer of faith is great, and Christians therefore should give prayer and support for the sick at the throne of heavenly grace. They should also seek God's blessing upon all proper means employed for their recovery. Moreover, when persons are sick, their minister, or some officer of the church, should be notified, that the minister, officers and members may unite their prayers in behalf of the sick. It is the privilege and duty of the pastor and elders to visit the sick and to minister to their physical, mental, and spiritual welfare. In view of the varying circumstances of the sick, the minister and elders should use discretion in the performance of this duty.

19-2. In certain circumstances a sick person may request a visitation of the elders and minister for the purposes of prayer and the anointing of oil as the Scripture states, *"Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord"* (James 5:14). This should be done with all dignity and sincerity, explaining that there is nothing magical in the oil itself but that it symbolises the anointing of God's Holy Spirit upon the afflicted in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection and prayers being called for in the healing of the individual. [Back to Top](#)

The Burial of the Dead

20-1. The services proper for such an occasion may include:

- a. The singing of appropriate psalms, hymns or spiritual songs;
- b. The reading of some suitable portion or portions of Scripture, with such remarks as it may seem proper to the minister to make;

c. Prayer, in which the bereaved shall be especially remembered, and God's grace sought on their behalf, that they may be sustained and comforted in their sorrow, and that their affliction may be blessed to their spiritual good;

d. Remembrances of the deceased from family and friends that enable thanksgiving to God for the life of that person.

e. Reminders of the great promises of God in Christ Jesus our Lord of eternal life for all who put their hope and trust in Him.

20-2. The funeral services are to be left largely to the discretion of the minister performing them, but he should always remember that the proper object of the service is the worship of God, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the consolation of the living.

20-3. Appropriate funeral services are found here:

[Order of Service](#)

[Order for a Child](#)

[Order for scattering ashes](#)

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Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving

21-1. The observance of days of fasting and of thanksgiving, as the dispensations of Divine Providence may direct, is both scriptural and rational.

21-2. Fasting and thanksgiving may be observed by individual Christians; by families; by particular congregations; by a number of congregations contiguous to each other; by the congregations under the care of a Presbytery; or by all the congregations of our Church Assemblies.

21-3. It should be left to the judgment and discretion of every Christian and family to determine when it is proper to observe a private fast or thanksgiving; and to the church Sessions to determine for particular congregations; and to the Presbyteries, to determine for larger districts. When it is deemed expedient that a fast or thanksgiving should be general, the call for it should be issued by the General Assembly. If at any time the civil power should appoint a fast or thanksgiving, in keeping with the Christian faith, it is the duty of the ministers and people of our communion to pay all due respect to it, inasmuch as it does not conflict with Holy Scripture.

21-4. Public notice should be given a sufficient time before the appointed day of fasting or thanksgiving, that persons may so order their affairs as to allow them to attend properly to the duties of the day.

21-5. There should be public worship upon all such days; and the prayers and singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the selection of Scripture, and sermons, should all be in a special manner adapted to the occasion.

21-6. On days of fasting, the minister should point out the authority and providences calling for the observance; and he should spend more than the usual time in solemn prayer, particular confession of sin, especially for the sins of the day and place; and the whole day should be spent in prayer and meditation.

21-7. On days of thanksgiving, the minister or worship leader should give information respecting the authority and providences that call for the observance; and he should spend more than the usual time in giving thanks, agreeably to the occasion, and in singing psalms or hymns of praise. On these days, the people should rejoice with holy gladness of heart; but their joy should be tempered with reverence, that they indulge in no excess or unbecoming behaviour. [Back to Top](#)

Christian Life in the Home

22-1. In addition to public worship, it is the duty of each person in secret, and of every family in private, to worship God.

22-2. Private and secret worship are commanded and encouraged by our Lord. In this duty everyone, should separately spend some time in prayer, reading the Scriptures, holy meditation, and serious self-examination. The many advantages arising from a conscientious performance of these duties are seen in those who regularly and faithfully practice them.

22-3. Family worship, which should be observed by every family, consists in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing praises; or in some briefer form of outspoken recognition of God.

22-4. Parents should instruct their children in the Word of God, and in the principles of our holy religion. The reading of devotional literature should be encouraged and every proper opportunity should be embraced for religious instruction.

22-5. Parents should set an example of godly conduct and consistent living before the family. Unnecessary private visits on the Lord's Day and indulgence in practices injurious to the spiritual life of the family should be avoided.

22-6. In the supreme task of religious education, parents should co-operate with the church by setting their children an example in regular and punctual attendance upon the sessions of the church school and the church services, by assisting them in the preparation of their lessons, and by leading them in the consistent application of the teachings of the Gospel in their daily activities.

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Suggested Reading

1. *Oh, Come Let Us Worship*, Robert G Rayburn
2. *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centred Worship*, Michael Horton
3. *Leading in Worship*, Terry Johnson
4. *Worship (2nd ed.)*, Hughes Oliphant Old
5. *Leading in Prayer*, Hughes Oliphant Old
6. *Lord's Supper, Given for you*, Keith Mathison
7. *The Lord's Supper*, Robert Letham
8. *The Lord's Supper*, Malcolm MacLean
9. *Grace and Gratitude*, B. A. Gerrish
10. *Word, Water, and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism*, J.V. Fesko
11. *Christian Baptism*, John Murray
12. *Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, Gregg Strawbridge
13. *Why Do We Baptize Infants? (Basics of the Faith)*, Bryan Chapell
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15. *Conduct Gospel-Centered Funerals: Applying the gospel at the unique challenges of death*, Brian Croft & Phil A. Newton
16. *Visit the Sick: Ministering God's Grace in Times of Illness (Ministering the Master's Way)*, Brian Croft

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