



GRACE COMMUNION
INTERNATIONAL

PASTORAL LITURGY GUIDE

Sacraments, Ceremonies, and Seasonal Worship



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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1 — Sacraments	5
Baptism	7
Lord's Supper (Communion)	13
Part 2 — Special Ceremonies and Services	19
Anointing of the Sick	21
Blessing of Children	23
Confession Ceremony	27
Ordination of an Elder	31
Installation of a Pastor	35
Commissioning of a Ministry Leader	39
Wedding Ceremony	43
Renewal of Marriage Vows	49
Funeral	55
Church Building Dedication	63
Retirement Recognition	67
Part 3 — Seasonal Worship Liturgies	71
Advent	73
Advent 1 Hope	75
Advent 2 Peace	77
Advent 3 Joy	81
Advent 4 Love	85
Christmas Eve or Christmas Day	89
Epiphany	93
Easter Preparation (Lent)	97
Palm Sunday	99
Maundy Thursday	101
Good Friday Worship	103
Holy Saturday	105
Easter Sunday	107
Ascension Sunday	111
Pentecost Worship	113
Trinity Sunday	117
Christ the King Sunday	119

Introduction

This worship handbook is written as a resource for congregations of Grace Communion International. This book contains information about several aspects of our corporate worship, including our sacraments, ceremonies, special occasion services, and special additions to our holy day worship services.

This worship handbook should be used in conjunction with the GCI Church Administration Manual ([CAD Manual](#)) which authorizes elders to conduct and supervise the denomination's church ceremonies. It is intended to be used by pastors, elders, ministry leaders, and Avenue champions to form elements of the weekly worship service and less frequent services.

While the ceremonies included in this handbook are scripts that in some cases could stand alone, they are intended to be templates that should be modified, as necessary, to be fitting for the context of specific situations. These ceremonies are designed to be personalized based on the individuals or groups participating in the ceremonies. Additionally, these ceremonies should be adapted, as appropriate, within each congregation's cultural context and needs of particular gatherings. Any adaptations made to these ceremonies must align with the theology of Grace Communion International as described in the Statement of Beliefs:

<https://www.gci.org/articles/the-gci-statement-of-beliefs/>.

The sacraments, ceremonies and worship service additions included in this handbook are grounded in Incarnational Trinitarian theology, which is the biblical, Christ-centered, and historically orthodox Christian faith and worship at the foundation of GCI's teaching. Jesus is God's self-revelation to the world, and he came to extend his relationship with the Father to all of humanity.

For more information about this theology, check out this resource:

<https://www.gci.org/articles/the-god-revealed-in-jesus-christ-a-booklet/>.

As we respond to Jesus' call to share in his relationship with his Father, in Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we become God's treasured children, adopted by grace. We place our trust in Jesus, who is our faithful Savior. Our worship services and other worship activities are an opportunity to participate in the work of Jesus. He is our true worship leader, and it is in union with him by the power of the Holy Spirit that we participate in worship.

GCI encourages its congregations to use a liturgy for worship (order of services) that incorporates the tools offered in the Revised Common Lectionary (**RCL**) along with GCI's RCL based sermons:

<https://equipper.gci.org/rcl-sermon-archive>.

You can find additional resources regarding worship here:

<https://resources.gci.org/worship>.

GCI's liturgical practice included two sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) and many ceremonies. The sacraments practiced in GCI are for all believers who have expressed faith in Jesus as Savior. Our Special Ceremonies and Services, depending on the context of the situation, may not apply to all believers. With few exceptions, sacraments and ceremonies are to be conducted by ordained elders, though others may participate if authorized by the lead pastor. See the CAD Manual or seek guidance from your ecclesiastical supervisor if you have any specific questions regarding who may perform ceremonies.

Unless otherwise noted, scriptures used throughout are from the New International Version of the Bible.



Part 1 — Sacraments

GCI's liturgical practice includes two sacraments:

Baptism and Holy Communion. Both are vital to the worship life of the Church as embodiments of grace, enacted testimonies to the love of God in Jesus Christ. Both are visible signs of an invisible grace — holy ordinances instituted by Christ wherein by visible signs Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers. Moreover, these sacraments enact the gospel by means of which the Spirit of God confirms to us the forgiving, renewing, and promising love of God in Jesus Christ, enlivening us in faith, hope, and love.

Both baptism and holy communion have present and eternal spiritual significance and consequences. Both are exclusively commanded by Jesus Christ and are offered by the believing church to those who have faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Church expects that believers and their offspring will be baptized and that those who affirm their baptism into Christ Jesus in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will also participate in holy communion.

The sacrament of baptism proclaims we are saved by Christ alone and not through our own repentance and faith. Our baptisms are effective only because they bear witness to and by faith share in Christ's baptism for us. His baptism as one of us was for the forgiveness of our sins and the provision of the promised Holy Spirit to indwell us. In our baptisms we affirm that the Holy Spirit whom Jesus received at his baptism was for us and is to be received by us through faith in him. In our baptisms, we affirm that the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus received at his baptism, was for us and is to be received by us through faith in him. In every act of baptism, each member is invited to recall and reaffirm their own baptism into Christ's baptism for us.

In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we partake of bread and wine in remembrance of our Savior, proclaiming his death until he comes again. The Lord's Supper is a participation in the death and resurrection of our Lord who shares with us our body and blood. Baptism is the sacrament of the beginning of the Christian life, and the Lord's Supper is the sacrament of continual communion with him and on-going growth and nourishment in Christian life.



Baptism

I. Purpose

Baptism is a joyous act of public witness to the reality of Christ's union with us and of our belonging to him from the beginning to the end of life. It is not the beginning of God's work in someone's life but a visible celebration of what is already accomplished for us by Jesus Christ. In Christ, our sins are forgiven, we are made new, and we belong to God's family. In baptism, we rejoice together in the love of the Father, the saving work of the Son, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

Grace Communion International is a believing church that baptizes in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, affirming the one baptism shared by all believers. Baptism is not primarily about what we do. It is a participation in the baptism of Jesus, who was baptized for all. We respond in faith to what Christ has already done for us.

The believing church offers this ceremony to people of all ages and of whatever abilities or disabilities. By it we affirm the universal scope of Christ's work and the invitation to all to share in his life by the Holy Spirit he has for us.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

Candidates for baptism or their parents/sponsors should first undergo pre-baptism counseling. That should include a clear explanation of the meaning of baptism as a witness to and sharing in Christ's one baptism for us. (See the CAD Manual in sections 2 and 4.13 for additional information.)

Baptism should normally take place during a worship service within the context of a church family, but it also may occur at another suitable time and location. The pastor conducts all baptisms, though others may be designated to participate. The setting should be accessible and welcoming, and the officiant should arrive early to prepare and to warmly greet those being baptized, as well as their family and friends. Pastors should ensure there is a clear discipleship pathway following the baptism, regardless of the age of the baptized individual. This should include

opportunities for him or her to affirm their baptism and share their faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in public settings of worship.

Baptism is a joyous ceremony of worship, and the minister should set the tone for gratitude and reverence. Prepare a certificate of baptism (resources.gci.org/baptism) and present the person being baptized or their parents/sponsors with the certificate after the ceremony.

Encourage those being baptized to wear appropriate clothing that they do not mind getting wet and will be appropriate to the occasion.

Guidance for Immersion

- In most cases, baptisms will take place in a tub, pool, or other safe body of water. Immersion has been the traditional practice in Grace Communion International. However, sprinkling may be used for those unable to be immersed.
- If in a tub, assist the person to be seated, kneel beside them, and carefully support them as they are lowered into the water.
- If in a pool, stand in the water with the individual, offering support as they bend at the knees while being lowered and raised.
- In all cases, ensure the person is prepared and supported. Explain exactly what can be expected during the ceremony. Determine if the person, parent or sponsor, is comfortable with and consents to the process.

Immersion Technique:

Ask the individual to clasp the elbow of one arm with the hand of the other and hold the nose with the free hand. Once you are sure the person is comfortable, as well as mentally and physically prepared, place one of your hands behind the back of the individual and grasp one shoulder with the other. Then gently lower the person into the water and quickly bring them up again. (You will have gotten consent for this touch beforehand or worked out an alternative.)

If the place of baptism is a pool or another environment in which the minister needs to enter the water, stand in the pool with the individual and follow the above instructions. Since the person will be standing rather than sitting, you will be supporting more of their weight. It can be helpful to ask them to bend at their knees during submersion to assist in supporting their own weight.

Structure Overview:

- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Scripture Reading(s)
- Pastoral Charge / Reflection
- Affirmation of Faith
- Act of Baptism
- Congregational Response (if applicable)
- Closing Blessing

III. Ceremony Template

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer

Officiant:

“Today we gather to celebrate the baptism of [Name]. In baptism, we remember and proclaim the saving work of Jesus Christ, who was baptized for us for the forgiveness of sins and has united himself with us and by his baptism gives us new life in the Spirit. Let us pray.” (In a short prayer, the officiant asks God’s blessing on this joyous occasion.)

B. Scripture Reading

Officiant (or designated reader):

Sample Scriptures to Share (* indicates primary passages to read):

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| • *Matthew 28:16–20 | • Romans 6:1–10 |
| • *Mark 1:6–11 | • Ephesians 4:1–6 |
| • Acts 2:32–39 | • 1 Peter 3:18–22 |

C. Pastoral Charge or Occasion Reflection

Officiant:

“Baptism reminds us of who we are in Christ. It is a public acknowledgment that we belong to Jesus, that his birth, baptism, life, death, and resurrection are for us, and that we share in his new life. Today we rejoice at the baptism of [Name] as we, his church, and he/she [or his/her parents/sponsor] affirm the truth of God’s love and forgiving grace already at work in his/her life.”

D. Affirmation of Faith

Officiant asks:

“[Name of person being baptized, or parents, guardians or sponsors], do you affirm with joy that in Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven, and that he is your Savior and Lord?”

Individual responds: “Yes.”

“Do you believe that Jesus is in the Father, and you are in Jesus, and Jesus is in you?”

Individual responds: “Yes.”

“Do you believe that your Father in heaven has adopted you in his Son Jesus, baptized you in his Holy Spirit, and made you his beloved child in Christ?”

Individual(s) responds: “Yes.”

If unable to answer at this time for themselves, the parents, those rightly exercising parental authority, or sponsors should be asked:

Officiant: Will you by faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ commit yourselves to the nourishment and growth of the faith, hope and love of [Name] for our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Individual(s) respond: “Yes, we will.”

E. Act of Baptism

Officiant:

“[Name], I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

(The individual is then immersed in water, supported as described in the instructions above.)

(If by sprinkling, typically after saying “[Name], I baptize you in the Name of...” dip your hand three times in the water, each time allowing drops of water to fall on the head of the child/person, and sequentially saying:
“the Father..., the Son..., and the Holy Spirit.”)

F. Congregational Response (if applicable)

Officiant:

“Church family, will you welcome and support [Name] as a beloved member of God’s family?”

Congregation:

“We will, by God’s grace.”

G. Closing Blessing

Officiant:

With permission, the officiant concludes the service by laying hands on the shoulders or head of the person who was baptized and offering a prayer of thanksgiving for the one baptized, for God’s love in sending Jesus for our salvation, and for the Holy Spirit whom the Father sends to be with us and in us.

Here is a sample prayer:

Father in heaven, we thank you for our salvation through your Son Jesus Christ and for the pouring out of your Holy Spirit on us. We rejoice with you that [Name] has received the Holy Spirit and believes that you love them and you want them to live with you forever. Jesus, we know that this faith is your gift to this person through the Holy Spirit, and we pray that in the days and years to come you will continue to share your life and knowledge of your Father in such a way that [Name] will continue to walk in faith, and that the gifts of your Spirit will flow into them and through them, into the lives of those around them. We pray in your name, Jesus, giving glory to you and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Or, if the person was presented for baptism by believing parents, those who have the right of parental responsibilities (guardians) or a sponsor known to the church, this sample prayer may be used:

Father in heaven, we thank you for our salvation through your Son Jesus Christ and for the pouring out of your Holy Spirit on us. We rejoice that we, the believing church and these [parent, guardians, sponsors] have presented [Name] to be baptized today, that he/she might receive your Holy Spirit and come to know and believe for himself/herself in your gracious and forgiving love for them and your desire to have him/her to live with you forever. Lord continually Jesus, we know that this faith will be your gift to this person through the faithful ministry Holy Spirit. So, we pray that in the days and years to come you will continue to share your life and knowledge of your Father in such a way that [Name] will continually walk in faith, and that the gifts of your Spirit will flow into them and through them, into the lives of those around them. We pray in your name, Jesus, giving glory to you and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Lord's Supper (Communion)

I. Purpose of the Ceremony

This sacrament celebrates our participation in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper, also called Communion or the Eucharist, is a means of grace through which we are spiritually nourished by the body and blood of Christ. It is a gift of God, given to the Church, which reminds us of who Jesus is and who we are in him. As we remember and proclaim the saving work of Jesus, we look forward with hope to his return and the fullness of God's kingdom.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

Communion may be celebrated weekly, monthly, quarterly, or during special worship services such as Easter, Advent, or other holy days. Communion should be offered no less than quarterly, but GCI encourages a more frequent offering and recommends doing so weekly. The Communion table is open to all who trust in Jesus Christ, adults, youth, and children with parental guidance. While pastors or ordained elders traditionally preside at the table, designated lay leaders may be appointed by the pastor in consultation with the leadership team when necessary.

Prepare the communion elements with care. The bread should be of good quality, symbolizing the dignity and hospitality of the meal. It may be leavened or unleavened, whole or broken into small pieces. Wine and/or grape juice should be clearly labeled and served in a way that honors the moment. Non-alcoholic options should be made available. When possible, offer gluten-free bread and ensure all elements are accessible to those with dietary restrictions or mobility needs.

Distribution of the Elements

Distribute the bread and cups to all participants. We recommend that everyone be served before partaking, to symbolize the unity of the Body. Once all have received the elements, the officiant may lift the bread and cup while reciting the words of institution (see below) and invite everyone to partake together.

Scripture Reading

The officiant may read a short scripture passage. Options include:

- Psalm 22–23
- Isaiah 25:6–9
- Matthew 26:26–30
- Luke 22:7–20
- John 6:47–58
- John 15:1–5
- 1 Corinthians 11:23–26
- Revelation 19:6–9

Words of Institution

The officiant takes the bread and says:

Jesus took bread and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then officiant takes the cup and says:

Jesus took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

Congregational Response (optional)

Officiant: “At this table we proclaim the mystery of our faith.”

Congregation: “We died with Christ, we rose with Christ, and when he comes, we will share in his glory.”

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The officiant offers a prayer. Sample:

Father, we thank you for this bread and cup, representing our participation in the body and blood of Christ. United with us in our human nature, he has taken us into the life he shares with you and the Spirit. Help us know and believe in the

communion we have with you and with one another. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Participation

When all have been served:

- Lift the bread and say: “The body of Christ, the bread of heaven.”
- All eat the bread.
- Lift the cup and say: “The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation.”
- All drink the cup.

Final Prayer

Father, we thank you for making us your adopted children in Christ, for baptizing us in your Spirit, and opening our eyes to the light of your love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

IV. Seasonal Communion Prayers (Optional)

Seasonal Communion prayers may be included to reflect themes from the Christian calendar: Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.

For the Season of Advent

Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son. In Jesus, you came to dwell among us. He is the fulfillment of your promises to Israel and the light for all nations. As we receive this bread and cup, we remember his first coming in humility and grace. We also look forward to his return in glory. Help us live with expectant hope, trusting your love and resting in your promises. We pray in Jesus’ name and give honor to you, your Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

For Christmas

Father, we thank you for sending your Son to become one of us. Though rich in divinity, he became poor in our humanity. In Jesus, we are made rich in grace and truth. Thank you for this bread and cup that mark our spiritual participation in Christ’s life. Help us live in the new life he gives. Strengthen our faith in his love and presence with us. We pray in Jesus’ name and give glory to you, your Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

For Epiphany

Jesus was baptized as a representative of all humanity. He had a real body with real blood. By assuming our human nature, he has brought us into communion with the Father and the Spirit. The baptism of Jesus, celebrated at Epiphany, points to our communion with the Trinity. In that light, the bread and the wine, reminders of Jesus' physical body and blood, picture how we are in communion with the Trinity through Jesus' baptism.

For Easter Preparation (Lent)

Our fallen human nature says “no” to the Father, and this is our sin problem. From within our fallen human nature — from within a flesh and blood body like ours — the Son said “yes” to the Father and “no” to Satan and our fallen nature. By this “yes,” he redeemed and transformed what it means to be human. In this light, the bread and wine of Communion symbolize the way Jesus' body and blood is the perfect human response to the love of the Father. Jesus, through his body and blood, is in communion with our human nature and holds us in communion with his divine nature, and thus he shares with us his perfect refusal to sin and his perfect relationship with the Father. During the season of Easter Preparation (Lent), Communion is a reminder of how Jesus lives in our fallen humanity and says “no” to sin on our behalf.

For Holy Week

Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son. Jesus died our death and overcame sin and death for us. We receive this bread and cup as a sign of our participation in his crucified body and shed blood. Help us remember your love poured out through Jesus. Fill us with joy in the victory of the cross. We pray through Jesus our Lord, giving thanks to you, our Father, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

For Easter Sunday

Father, we praise you for raising Jesus from the dead. In his resurrection, you have raised us to new and eternal life. Thank you for this bread and cup, a sign of our participation in Christ's risen life. Teach us to live in the joy of our adoption and our place in the resurrection. Strengthen us by your Spirit to walk in this truth. We pray in the name of Jesus and give glory to you, to your Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

For Ascension Sunday

Father, we thank you for lifting us up to your right hand with your Son, Jesus Christ. You have seated us with him in the heavenly realms. In this bread and cup, we remember our place in your communion of love. Help us live as your children, knowing we belong with you. May your Spirit help us grasp this truth. We pray in Jesus' name and give honor to you, to your Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

For Pentecost Sunday

Father, we thank you for sending the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus, you have poured out your Spirit on all people. We take this bread and cup as a sign of our participation in your life. Thank you for dwelling with us through the Comforter. Empower us, by your Spirit, to walk in courage and truth. Fill us with your love and light. We pray in Jesus' name and give glory to you, your Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Special services are moments when the church community comes alongside individuals and families during significant life events. Some are joyful milestones that call for celebration, such as weddings, ordinations, and commissioning services. Others are times of sorrow, like funerals, where we mourn with those who mourn and offer the comfort of Christ.

These ceremonies also mark meaningful milestones in ministry, such as church building dedications and retirement recognitions. They remind us of God's presence in every season. In moments of need, such as anointing the sick, these services become tangible expressions of hope, healing, and care.

Through each of these sacred gatherings, we bear witness to the faithfulness of God and the shared journey of life in Christ.



Part 2 — Special Ceremonies and Services

Special services are moments when the church community comes alongside individuals and families during significant life events. Some are joyful milestones that call for celebration, such as weddings, ordinations, and commissioning services. Others are times of sorrow, like funerals, where we mourn with those who mourn and offer the comfort of Christ.

These ceremonies also mark meaningful milestones in ministry, such as church building dedications and retirement recognitions. They remind us of God's presence in every season. In moments of need, such as anointing the sick, these services become tangible expressions of hope, healing, and care.

Through each of these sacred gatherings, we bear witness to the faithfulness of God and the shared journey of life in Christ.



Anointing of the Sick

I. Purpose

Anointing the sick is an act of pastoral care in which the church gathers around those who are ill or suffering to pray for healing, comfort, and assurance of God's presence. It is a visible expression of the compassion of Christ. This ceremony may take place at home, in a hospital, or before/after a worship service.

II. Suggested Structure Overview & Instructions

Depending on the wishes of the person being anointed, an anointing ceremony may involve only one officiant, or it might include several members of the congregation. It is a best practice to have three or more people present. When members of a different sex are involved, it is mandatory that at least three people be present.

A sharing of Scripture and brief prayer might precede the anointing, thanking God for his grace and love and for hearing the prayers of his people in their need.

The officiant should then lay hands on the sick person's head or shoulders, or simply hold the person's hand, and pray for healing. Ask permission first.

The sick person may then be anointed with oil (preferably olive oil) by dipping a finger or thumb in the oil and applying it to the person's forehead while saying:

"We anoint you for healing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

III. Sample Ceremony:

A. Sample Scriptures:

- Isaiah 53:4–5
- Matthew 11:28–30
- James 5:14–15
- 2 Corinthians 1:3–4
- Revelation 21:3–4

B. Sample Prayer

Our Father, we lift up [Name] into your loving care. In your mercy and power, bring what is right and good into [Name]'s life. Through the bond of the Holy Spirit, who ministers your love to us, and in union and communion with Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, we pray as one. Make [Name] whole according to your will, even as we trust that complete wholeness awaits in the life to come. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Anointing:

The sick person may then be anointed with oil (preferably olive oil) by dipping a finger or thumb in the oil and applying it to the person's forehead while saying:

"We anoint you for healing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Note: Some officiants may wish to make the sign of the cross on the forehead when applying oil.



Blessing of Children

I. Purpose

The blessing of children is an act of worship that follows Jesus' example of welcoming and blessing the little ones, particularly infants to school age. It is a visible reminder that every child is a gift of God and beloved by the Father. This ceremony celebrates the child's life, affirms God's love and presence, as well as provides an opportunity for the family and congregation to commit to nurture the child in faith.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

This blessing is most fitting during a worship service but may also take place at another meaningful location for the family. Parents, grandparents, siblings, and extended family are encouraged to come forward and participate.

Children may be blessed with prayer, laying on of hands, and optionally anointed with oil as a sign of God's Spirit at work in their lives. The congregation is invited to affirm their role in supporting the child as part of the family of faith. All of the attending family, parents, grandparents, and siblings should be invited forward to participate in the ceremony.

Adaptation for Multiple Children:

When more than one child from different families is being blessed in the same service, invite each child and their family forward together. A single pastoral reflection and congregational response may be shared, while the act of blessing and prayer may be spoken over each child individually. Oil and laying on of hands may be repeated for each child, with short, personal words of blessing (e.g., "You are beloved of God and blessed in Christ forever. Amen.").

Structure Overview

- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Scripture Reading(s)
- Pastoral Charge / Reflection
- Family Presentation and Affirmations
- Act of Blessing (with prayer and optional anointing)
- Congregational Response (if applicable)
- Closing Blessing

III. Ceremony Template

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer

Officiant:

“Children are a blessing from God and a reason to rejoice. Today we celebrate the gift of [Child’s Name] (or these children), thanking God for his love and presence in their lives. Let us pray.”

(Short prayer of gratitude for the child/children and family/families.)

B. Scripture Reading

Officiant (or designated reader):

(Read one or more of the suggested scriptures.)

- Matthew 19:13–15
- Mark 10:13–16
- Luke 18:15–17
- Ephesians 1:3–6

C. Pastoral Charge or Occasion Reflection

Officiant:

“In Jesus, we are all children of the Father, dependent on his care, just as [Child’s Name/these children] depend on their families for life and nurture. We rejoice that they are loved not only by their family but also by the God who created them and holds them in everlasting love.”

D. Family Presentation and Affirmations

Officiant:

“Will [Parents’/Guardians’ Names] please come forward, along with brothers, sisters, and family who wish to stand with them?”

(Family gathers at the front.)

Officiant:

“[Parents’/Guardians’ Names], do you affirm your desire to raise [Child’s Name] in the love of Christ and to seek his guidance as you nurture them in faith?”

Parents/Guardians respond: “Yes, by God’s grace.”

(If multiple families, each set of parents/guardians answers in turn.)

E. Act of Blessing

Officiant:

(Optionally anoint the child with oil by touching the forehead.)

“[Child’s Name], you are blessed by the Holy Spirit and beloved as the Father’s own child in Christ forever. Amen.”

(Repeat for each child individually if more than one. The congregation may remain in prayerful silence or sing softly during this time.)

Sample Prayer:

“Father in heaven, we thank you for the gift of these children. Guard them from danger, assure them of your love, and surround them with your Spirit. Bless their parents and families with wisdom and faith as they nurture them in Christ. May these children grow in joy, grace, and love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

F. Congregational Response (if applicable)

Officiant asks: “Do you, the congregation of [Church Name], receive [Child’s Full Name / these children] into the fellowship of the Body of Christ?”

Congregation responds: “We do.”

Officiant asks: “Will you love, uphold, and support [Child’s First Name / these children] in their life in Christ?”

Congregation responds: “We will, in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

G. Closing Blessing

Officiant: “[Child’s Full Name / these children], we give thanks to God for you and bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”



Confession Ceremony

I. Purpose

This ceremony offers a communal expression of confession. Rooted in the assurance of Christ's finished work, this sacred moment provides a space for personal reflection, acknowledgment of sin, and reception of forgiveness. In confessing our sins, we respond to the Spirit's invitation to deeper communion with God and one another.

This ceremony underscores our identity in Jesus, who has reconciled the world to himself and freed us from the power of sin.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

This ceremony may be led by a pastor or lay facilitator. It can be used in corporate worship, spiritual retreats, or personal settings. It includes:

- An invitation to confession, offering theological context and assurance of forgiveness
- A guided confession, with space for silent prayer
- A communal liturgy of forgiveness and restoration
- Scripture readings and prayers reinforcing the gift of reconciliation

This ceremony may be used during Easter Preparation or at other points in the liturgical year when confession is emphasized. Always affirm the forgiveness already accomplished in Christ.

III. Sample Scriptures

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Psalm 51:1–2, 10–12 | • John 20:21–23 |
| • Isaiah 1:18 | • Romans 8:1–2 |
| • Jeremiah 31:33–34 | • 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 |
| • Matthew 6:9–15 | • Colossians 2:13–14 |
| • Luke 15:11–24 | • 1 John 1:8–9 |

IV. Ceremony Template

Welcome and Invitation to Confession

Leader: When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he includes the words: “**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.**” Sin is not simply wrongdoing; it is anything that harms our relationship with God, ourselves, or one another.

In a world marred by brokenness, we all fall short. Yet God is rich in mercy. Through Christ, we are reconciled and restored. Confession is not about earning forgiveness. It is about receiving what is already ours in Christ.

We are invited to turn toward God with open hearts. We acknowledge our need, and we trust in God’s grace to renew us.

Scripture Reading

(Choose one or more from the list above.)

Silent Confession

Leader: Let us now enter a time of silence. In the stillness, we reflect on the ways we have sinned, in thought, word, and deed. We bring to God what we have done and what we have left undone. We confess the ways we have turned toward other sources to save us, relied on our own wisdom, or withheld grace from others.

Pause for silent reflection. Invite participants to bring their whole selves before God. Encourage them to reflect on any ways they may have turned away from God or hurt others, trusting that God meets them with mercy and grace. Let the silence be long enough for meaningful reflection.

Spoken Confession

(Leader or congregation may read together.)

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you and against one another. We have not loved you with our whole hearts. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have chosen fear, pride, and self-interest over faith, hope, and love.

But you, O Lord, are full of compassion. Forgive us, heal us, and make us new. In your mercy, restore us to right relationship with you and with one another. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Leader: Hear the good news: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. The accusations against us have been nailed to the cross. The chains of sin have been broken. We are free. We are loved. We are made new. As the apostle Paul writes, “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!” Let us walk forward in grace, strengthened by the Spirit, and reconciled through Christ our Savior.

Optional Closing Prayer

Loving God, thank you for your mercy that meets us here. Thank you for your Son, who took our sin and gave us his righteousness. Strengthen us to live as your reconciled people — gentle in spirit, humble in heart, and ready to forgive as we have been forgiven. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Optional Song or Worship Response

You may conclude this ceremony with a short worship response, such as a sung Kyrie, Taizé chorus, or a hymn of grace. These simple, repeated prayers and songs create space for reflection and allow the community to respond together to God’s mercy and love.



Ordination of an Elder

I. Purpose

Ordination is the Church's way of affirming Christ's call to a role of proclaiming the gospel, shepherding God's people, teaching the faith, and providing spiritual leadership within the Body of Christ. In Scripture, elders were appointed through prayer and the laying on of hands (**Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9**).

Through ordination, the community recognizes both the inward call of the Holy Spirit and the outward confirmation of the Church. It is not simply an assignment to a task but a setting apart to an office of spiritual oversight, rooted in the example of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who calls leaders to serve in humility, love, and faithfulness.

Because elders hold GCI's clergy status, ordination has ecclesiastical, legal, and cultural significance. It reflects not only the individual's sense of calling and gifting but also the church's communal discernment of the Spirit's work in their life. This ceremony celebrates Christ's provision of leaders for his Church. Recognizing those called to serve as shepherds, teachers, and equippers of the Body of Christ.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

Ordination should normally take place during a worship service in the congregation where the elder will serve. The ordination process is usually initiated by the local pastor or in collaboration with their supervisor, it is then approved through the GCI Home Office by formal application and review. Once approved, the service is conducted in the local congregation with participation from the pastor and elders, and if applicable the pastor's spouse.

III. Ceremony Template

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer

Officiant: “Today we gather to ordain [Name] to the office of elder in [Church name]. This is a sacred act through which the church affirms Christ’s call, the Spirit’s equipping, and our commitment as a congregation to walk alongside this servant-leader. Let us pray.” (Short prayer of thanksgiving for Christ’s provision of leaders.)

B. Scripture Reading

Officiant (or designated reader):

(One or more of the suggested passages is read.)

- Ephesians 4:7–16
- 1 Timothy 3:1–7
- 1 Peter 5:1–4
- Acts 20:28
- Titus 1:5–9

C. Pastoral Charge

Officiant: “[Name], ordination is not simply an assignment to a task, but a recognition that Christ has called you, by the Spirit, to the office of elder. In this office, you are entrusted to shepherd, teach, and guide God’s people with humility and faithfulness.

We have witnessed your faith, your service, and the gifts of the Spirit at work in your life — gifts of [examples: discernment, encouragement, hospitality, teaching, shepherding]. The elders of [Church name] and the church council have recommended that you be ordained to this office, and today we affirm Christ’s call on your life. As Christ the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, so you are called to lead by serving, to guard the flock with care, and to build up the church in love.”

D. Invitation of Spouse and Elders

Officiant: “I now invite [Name]’s spouse, if present, and the other elders of [Church name] to join us at the front as a sign of shared partnership in ministry and support in this ordination.”

E. Affirmation of Commitment

Officiant asks: “[Name], are you willing to serve this congregation as an elder?”

Candidate responds: “I am.”

“Will you faithfully serve the people of [congregation name] as an elder, with Christ’s help, upholding the responsibilities and duties of this office?”

Candidate responds: “I will.”

F. Congregational Response

Officiant asks: “Church family, do you affirm that Jesus has called [Name] to serve as an elder among you?”

Congregation responds: “We do.”

Officiant asks: “Will you faithfully support this elder, pray for them, and uphold them in this office with Christ’s help?”

Congregation responds: “We will.”

G. Act of Ordination

(Officiant anoints the candidate with oil, applying a small amount to the forehead.)

Officiant: “In Christ’s name and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we ordain you to be an elder of [Church name], a congregation of Grace Communion International.”

(The officiant and other elders lay hands on the candidate, with the spouse also standing nearby in support.)

H. Closing Prayer and Blessing

Sample Prayer:

“Our Father in heaven, we rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, and thank you for setting apart [Name] to serve as an elder in [Church name]. Fill them with wisdom, courage, patience, and love, that they may faithfully proclaim the gospel, lead with wisdom, and shepherd your people in Christ. Bless their ministry in Christ and bless this congregation through their leadership. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”



Installation of a Pastor

I. Purpose

The installation of a pastor is a sacred and celebratory moment in the life of a local church. This ceremony recognizes the Spirit's calling, affirms the partnership between pastor and congregation, and commits both to walk together in Christ's love and mission. Grounded in our Trinitarian theology, this service acknowledges that pastoral ministry is a participation in Christ's ongoing shepherding work, empowered by the Spirit and anchored in the Father's love for the Church. Installation is not a hiring transaction. It is a communal discernment affirmed in prayer and covenant. It is a way of saying, "Yes, Lord," together.

II. Instructions

Setting: This ceremony is designed to be held during a worship service in the local congregation where the pastor will serve.

Officiant: A denominational representative (e.g., Regional Director, Superintendent, or another appointed elder) should lead the ceremony.

Participants: The pastor (and, if applicable, their spouse) comes forward when invited. Other elders present may also be invited to participate, particularly during the laying on of hands.

Tone: Celebratory, communal, and reverent — recognizing God's work in the life of the pastor and the congregation.

III. Ceremony Template

[The officiant invites the new pastor (and spouse, if applicable) to come forward.
Other elders may also be invited to the front.]

Officiant's Words to the Pastor: “[Full Name], it has become apparent to our elders, our denominational leaders, and this congregation that Jesus Christ has called you through the Holy Spirit to serve as the pastor of [Name of Congregation], a congregation of Grace Communion International.”

Covenant Question to the Pastor: “[First Name], do you agree to faithfully and humbly serve the people of [Congregation's Name] in the office of pastor — relying on Christ, in the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit — and to work in unity with your denominational supervisors and uphold the responsibilities of this calling?”

Pastor Responds: “I do.”

Covenant Question to the Congregation: “People of [Name of Congregation], will you faithfully support your pastor, pray for him/her, and uphold him/her in love and unity as he/she leads and serves among you in Christ's name?”

Congregation Responds: “Yes, we will.”

Anointing and Declaration

[The officiant anoints the pastor with oil using a small amount on the forehead.]

‘In Christ's name and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we hereby install you as pastor of [Church Name], a congregation of Grace Communion International.”

Laying on of Hands and Prayer

[The officiant lays hands on the pastor. Other elders may join. The officiant prays.]

IV. Sample Prayer

Prayer of Installation

Loving God, We rejoice in your faithfulness and in your calling of [First Name] to serve this congregation. Thank you for the Spirit's work in shaping, guiding, and preparing him/her for this ministry.

Fill [him/her] with wisdom, compassion, courage, and humility. May [he/she] serve not by human strength but through the life of Christ within.

Bless this congregation as they walk together with [First Name]. May mutual love, joy, and unity abound as they participate in your mission in this place.

We ask all this in the name of our Shepherd and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

V. Notes for Adaptation

- If the pastor's spouse is actively involved in ministry, a brief word of welcome and prayer may be included for them.
- Consider including a brief moment for the pastor to share a word of gratitude or commitment at the end, if appropriate.
- This ceremony may be followed by a commissioning song, prayer of blessing from the congregation, or a time of fellowship after the service.



Commissioning of a Ministry Leader

I. Purpose

The commissioning of a ministry leader is a sacred act of the Church, affirming the Spirit's calling, the leader's gifting, and the congregation's support. It recognizes that Christ equips his Body with diverse gifts and sets apart leaders to serve for the good of the Church and the sake of the gospel.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

Commissioning should normally take place during a worship service in the congregation where the ministry leader will serve. The pastor performs all commissioning services, though other elders or leaders may participate.

This ceremony may be used for a variety of leadership roles, including:

- **Avenue Champions** (Faith, Hope, and Love Avenues)
- **Ministry Team Leaders** (e.g., worship, children, youth, outreach)
- **Other congregational leadership positions** as discerned by the pastor and church council

The pastor sets the tone by naming the gifts, character, and calling recognized in the leader. Commissioning should affirm the leader's commitment to Christ, acknowledge the Spirit's equipping, and invite the congregation's prayerful support.

Structure Overview

- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Scripture Reading(s)
- Pastoral Charge (naming gifts, calling, and context of service)
- Affirmation of Commitment (Leader's response)
- Congregational Response (Community's promise of support)
- Act of Commissioning (anointing and/or laying on of hands)
- Closing Prayer and Blessing

IV. Ceremony Template

A. Welcome and Opening Prayer

Officiant:

"Today we gather to commission [Name] as [Role/Ministry Leader]. This is a joyful occasion as we affirm the Spirit's calling and the gifts God has given for service in his church. Let us pray." (Short prayer of thanksgiving for Christ's Body and the Spirit's work of equipping leaders.)

B. Scripture Reading

Officiant (or designated reader):

(Read one or more of the suggested scriptures.)

- Jeremiah 1:4–9
- Matthew 28:18–20
- John 15:16
- Romans 12:4–8
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–11
- Ephesians 4:11–13
- 1 Peter 4:10–11

C. Pastoral Charge

Officiant: “[Name], we have seen in you the gifts of [examples: encouragement, hospitality, discernment, shepherding]. We have witnessed your faithful service in [areas of ministry]. We believe Christ has called and equipped you for this work, and today we commission you to lead as [role]. [Person’s full name], it has become apparent to our elders and to our congregation that Jesus Christ has called you, through the Holy Spirit, to serve as the leader of our [name of ministry]. We do so with joy, trusting the Spirit to guide you and to bless this congregation through your service.”

D. Affirmation of Commitment

Officiant asks: “[Name], do you commit yourself to serve Christ and this congregation as [role], faithfully and humbly, seeking the Spirit’s guidance and working in unity with your pastor and fellow leaders?”

Leader responds: “I do, with Christ’s help.”

E. Congregational Response

Officiant asks: “Church family, do you commit to support [Name] in prayer, to encourage them in their ministry, and to walk alongside them in service to Christ?”

Congregation responds: “We do, by God’s grace.”

F. Act of Commissioning

(Officiant may anoint the individual with oil, laying hands on their shoulders or head. Other elders/leaders may join in.)

Officiant: “[Name], we commission you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to serve Christ and this congregation as [role]. Amen.”

G. Closing Prayer and Blessing

Sample Prayer:

“Father in heaven, we rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ and thank you for setting apart [Name] to lead in your church. Fill them with wisdom, patience, and courage. Strengthen them in faith, sustain them with your Spirit, and bless their ministry that it may bear fruit for your kingdom. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”



Wedding Ceremony

I. Purpose

This ceremony celebrates the holy covenant of marriage, instituted by God as a reflection of his faithful, self-giving love. In the joining of two lives, we witness a visible sign of the invisible grace of God, who draws us into communion with himself and one another.

Marriage is a sacred union, rooted in the love of the triune God. It is more than a legal contract or cultural tradition. It is a divine calling that invites two people to participate in God's ongoing work of love, service, and reconciliation. This covenant bears witness to the mystery of Christ and the Church, calling us to mutual devotion, humility, and joy.

In Christian marriage, bride and groom become one flesh. They are partners in grace, co-laborers in God's mission. They are called to love each other as Christ loves the Church, to offer support in faith and life, and to extend compassion and hospitality in their shared journey.

Surrounded by the community of faith, the couple commits themselves to one another with reverence and joy, trusting in the presence of Christ to sustain them.

II. Instructions

Setting: This ceremony typically takes place in a worship space or outdoor setting, chosen by the couple and officiant.

Officiant: A GCI pastor or ordained elder should preside. Local leadership may assist in selecting readers or musicians.

Language: Inclusive and accessible language should be used. Avoid theological or cultural assumptions that may not reflect the couple's or community's background.

Accessibility: Ensure participants with mobility or sensory needs are accommodated. Microphones and clearly labeled seating may be helpful.

Legal Requirements: Comply with local legal requirements for solemnizing marriages, including documentation and pronouncements.

III. Sample Scriptures

You may invite the couple, family, or members of the congregation to read from:

- Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18–24
- Mark 10:6–9
- Ephesians 5:21–28
- Philippians 2:1–5
- 1 Corinthians 13:1–7
- Revelation 19:6–9

IV. Ceremony Template

Welcome and Gathering

Officiant: "[Groom's first name] and [Bride's first name], together with your families and friends, we welcome everyone who has gathered to share in your joy and witness your covenant together.

Having grown in love, you have chosen to commit yourselves in marriage and be united as husband and wife."

Opening Reflection

"Marriage is a natural and divine institution, a sacred covenant. God created us in his image to share life in love with him and one another. In giving us marriage, God invites us to participate in his grace, compassion, and joy.

In Scripture, we see marriage as a union that mirrors Christ's love for the Church. It calls for mutual submission, deep respect, and tender care. As you enter this covenant, let your love reflect the humility and devotion found in Christ."

Scripture Reading (optional)

A family member or friend may read one of the passages listed above, or another passage chosen by the couple.

Message or Short Homily

A brief reflection on marriage as participation in the life of the triune God.
(This section may be used or adapted by the officiant as part of the wedding ceremony.)

We are gathered here today in the presence of God to witness the union of this couple in Christian marriage. In doing so, we affirm the sacredness of marriage, which is more than a social or legal agreement. It is a covenant that reflects God's own love and commitment to his people.

Scripture teaches us that marriage was instituted by God. In Genesis, we read that God created humanity in his image and said, "It is not good for man to be alone." God made a suitable partner, and together they became one flesh. Marriage is rooted in this divine design — a relationship of mutual love, care, and respect.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul uses marriage to describe the love Christ has for the Church. Christ gave himself up for the Church, nurturing it and presenting it holy and blameless. This sacrificial love is the pattern for every Christian marriage.

As [Bride's Name] and [Groom's Name] make their vows today, they are entering a sacred mystery — where two become one. They are choosing to walk together through the seasons of life: joy and sorrow, health and hardship, abundance and want.

But they do not do so alone. Christ is with them. His Spirit empowers them to forgive, to serve, to grow in grace, and to remain faithful. Their marriage is not only for their own blessing, but also a witness to the love of God in the world.

Let us give thanks today for this couple, and may their union reflect the kindness, strength, and beauty of the One who first loved us.

Exchange of Vows

Officiant: "Do you, [Groom's full name], promise, in covenant before God and these witnesses, to take [Bride's full name] to be your lawful, wedded wife, to love her, cherish her, honor her, respect her and provide for her for as long as you both shall live?"

Groom responds: "I do."

"Do you, [Bride's full name], promise, in covenant before God and these witnesses, to take [Groom's full name] to be your lawful, wedded husband, to love him, cherish him, honor him, comfort him and respect him for as long as you both shall live?"

Bride responds: "I do."

Personal Vows (optional)

Couple may include written personal vows or continue with traditional phrasing:

Groom: "I, [Groom's full name], with the help of God, take you, [Bride's full name], to be my wife. To have and to hold from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part. This I pledge to you."

Bride: "I, [Bride's full name], with the help of God, take you, [Groom's full name], to be my husband. To have and to hold from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part. This I pledge to you."

Exchange of Rings

Officiant: "These rings are symbols of the love and faithfulness you promise one another. May they remind you always of your covenant."

Couple exchanges rings.

Prayer of Blessing

Sample:

"Loving God, we thank you for [Bride's name] and [Groom's name].

As they begin this new chapter together, grant them grace to love with compassion, serve with joy, forgive with tenderness, and grow in faith together. Surround their union with your peace, and guide their steps by your Spirit. Amen."

Pronouncement

Officiant: "By the authority of Jesus Christ and the laws of this land, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss."

"I present to you, [preferred names of the couple]."

V. Notes for Adaptation

- Language may be adapted to reflect cultural context while maintaining theological integrity.
- Couple may choose to incorporate ethnic or family traditions with prior approval from the officiant.
- Personal vows may be used alongside traditional phrasing.
- Scripture readings may be in multiple languages.
- Elements such as communion, foot washing, or blessings from elders may be added in extended services.
- All adaptations should reflect the Trinitarian nature of God and the covenantal heart of Christian marriage.



Renewal of Marriage Vows

I. Purpose

The renewal of marriage vows is an opportunity for couples to reaffirm the covenant of love and faithfulness they first made before God and their community. Rooted in the love of the triune God, this renewal celebrates the grace that sustains a lifelong union.

Marriage reflects the faithful love of Christ for the Church. As couples walk through the seasons of life, they are continually invited to renew their “yes” to one another in gratitude and trust. This ceremony acknowledges both the joys and challenges of the years shared, giving thanks for God’s presence that has held them together and will continue to do so.

Renewing vows reminds the couple and the community that marriage is more than a legal bond. It is participation in God’s covenant love — an outward sign of an inward grace that reveals God’s steadfast mercy, forgiveness, and joy.

II. Instructions

- **Setting:** This ceremony is designed for use during a worship service, anniversary celebration, or special gathering of family and friends.
- **Officiant:** May be a pastor or ordained elder familiar with the couple.
- **Participants:** The couple should stand together at the front, with family or friends nearby.
- **Tone:** Grateful, celebratory, and reverent. The focus is on God’s faithfulness and the couple’s enduring love.
- **Adaptation:** Language may be adjusted for long-term marriages. Optional prayers or readings may be added.

III. Sample Scriptures

The officiant, relatives, or members of the congregation may read one or more of the following passages:

- Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18–24
- Mark 10:6–8
- Ephesians 5:21–28
- Philippians 2:1–5
- 1 Corinthians 13:1–7
- Revelation 19:6–9

IV. Ceremony Template

Opening Words

"[Husband's first name] and [wife's first name], you have asked to renew your marriage vows on this anniversary of your wedding. In the presence of God, your family, and your friends, we are honored to witness this moment.

The commitment you made to each other has endured through many seasons. You have renewed it often in your hearts through joy and hardship, and today we celebrate the grace that has carried you through."

Reflection on Marriage

"[First names], you have lived together in marriage in Christ for [number of years] years. Together, you have faced challenges and blessings, and through it all, you have not been alone. Your marriage has been and continues to be participation in the life and love of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

In Jesus, we are free to love without condition, to forgive without resentment, and to be faithful through every season. In that love, you continue to say, 'I am not myself without you. I give my life and all that I am to you.'

Because marriage is a divine covenant, it is fitting that you now renew your promises to one another in the presence of God and this community."

Vows of Renewal

To the Husband: "[Husband's first name], [wife's first name] has given you her love and her life. Do you promise, as her faithful husband before God, to continue to live with her in love and unity, to comfort and honor her, to support her in joy and sorrow, in sickness and in health, and to give yourself only to her, so long as you both shall live?"

Husband responds: "I do."

To the Wife: "[Wife's first name], [husband's first name] has given you his love and his life. Do you promise, as his faithful wife before God, to continue to live with him in love and unity, to comfort and honor him, to support him in joy and sorrow, in sickness and in health, and to give yourself only to him, so long as you both shall live?"

Wife responds: "I do."

Exchange of Promises

"[First names], please join hands and repeat these promises to one another."

Husband repeats:

"I, [his full name], promise to continue to take you, [her first name], to be my wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part."

Wife repeats: "I, [her full name], promise to continue to take you, [his first name], to be my husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part."

Exchange of Rings

Officiant: “[Husband’s first name], is there a token of your love for [wife’s first name]?”

Husband responds: “Yes, a ring, as a token of my unending love.”

“[Wife’s first name], is there a token of your love for [husband’s first name]?”

Wife responds: “Yes, a ring, as a token of my unending love.”
“You may now exchange the rings.”

Blessing of the Marriage

“[First names], let us join hands and pray for God’s continued blessing upon your marriage.”

Sample Prayer

Father in heaven, thank you for [husband’s first name] and [wife’s first name].

As they renew their vows in the name of Jesus, bless their union and their family. Protect them from harm and lead them in the peace of your Spirit.

May their companionship be full of joy and patience, their home a place of grace and laughter, and their love a reflection of your faithfulness.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

V. Notes for Adaptation

- This ceremony may be adapted for milestone anniversaries or for couples renewing vows privately.
- A child, grandchild, or close friend may offer a reading, prayer, or song.
- The officiant may include a short message on God's faithfulness through marriage.
- The service may conclude with a congregational blessing or a song of thanksgiving.



Funeral

I. Purpose

This ceremony acknowledges the reality of death and proclaims the good news of resurrection through Jesus Christ. Rooted in the love of the triune God, it offers space to grieve, remember, and cling to the hope of new life. Whether death is expected or sudden, peaceful, or tragic, we gather in worship to give thanks for the life of the deceased and to find comfort in the faithfulness of God.

In the presence of loss, we recall that Christ has conquered death. Through his incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus has entered fully into our humanity. He grieves with us, walks with us, and leads us into everlasting life. The funeral service is an opportunity to entrust our loved one into God's eternal care, affirm our shared hope in Christ, and surround one another with compassion.

This ceremony may be adapted with pastoral sensitivity, particularly in cases of suicide, the death of a child, or unexpected tragedy. The pastor or elder presiding may draw from the optional language below to express the love of God in difficult circumstances.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

This funeral service is designed to offer structure while allowing for pastoral flexibility and family participation.

The officiant should consider:

- Meeting with the family to learn about the deceased and any personal wishes for the ceremony.
- Collaborating with those offering music, Scripture readings, or eulogies.
- Offering comfort while maintaining theological clarity and pastoral sensitivity.

Special Notes for Difficult Circumstances

- **Suicide:** Emphasize the inseparability of God's love and the hope that remains through Christ.
- **Death of a Child:** Affirm the child's belovedness and God's eternal embrace.
- **Tragic or Unexpected Loss:** Acknowledge sorrow, confusion, and the presence of Christ in suffering.

III. Sample Scriptures

The following passages are suitable for funeral readings and may be read by the officiant or selected participants:

- John 11:25–26
- Romans 8:38–39
- Revelation 21:1–4
- 1 Corinthians 15:51–57
- Psalm 23
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14

IV. Ceremony Template

Opening Words

“Dear friends, we are gathered in the presence of God to remember and give thanks for the life of [full name]. In our grief, we gather to seek comfort, recall with gratitude a life that has touched ours, and find hope in the promises of Christ. May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.”

Optional Pastoral Preface

Special pastoral tones may be added here for cases of tragic death, suicide, or loss of a child.

Music

Music chosen by the family may be played, performed, or sung.

Eulogy or Remembrances

A person or persons selected by the family may share stories and memories.

Scripture Reading and Message

The officiant reads selected passages and offers a 10–15-minute reflection.

Sample message themes:

- Jesus shares in our grief and promises resurrection.
- Death is not the end; we are united with Christ.
- God’s faithfulness extends beyond the grave.

Sample sermon:

In the midst of our grief, may the compassionate love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit give us comfort, hope, and peace.

What is this great unknown, this feared and sorrowful loss called death?

Before Jesus raised his beloved friend Lazarus from the dead, he told Lazarus’ sister Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.”¹ Those are words of great hope and joy. And yet it is also natural and fitting for us to grieve the loss of those we love. Even Jesus, who knew that Lazarus would soon be alive again, joined with his friends in weeping for Lazarus.

Jesus loves us so much that he shares in our humanity. He grieves with us. He weeps with us. And he died like us and was resurrected for us. The apostle Paul tells us that when we die, we are not alone; we die with Jesus. And Paul said that not only do we die with Jesus, but we also rise from the dead with Jesus. It is in Jesus’ own death and resurrection that we find our freedom from the bondage of death and all its sorrow.

¹ John 11:25. Biblical quotations, unless noted, are from the 2011 edition of the NIV.

In the book of Hebrews we read, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”²

Death is no longer a master, holding us all in fear and helplessness. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has made us free. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”³

Because Jesus lives, death cannot hold us! Our Father created us all to be his beloved children in Jesus Christ. Jesus is our life and our righteousness and has brought us with him into his perfect relationship with the Father.

“Listen, I tell you a mystery,” Paul wrote. “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality...then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’”⁴

Jesus liberated us from the bonds of death. “Where, O death, is your victory?” Paul wrote. “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! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵

²Hebrews 2:14–15

³1 Corinthians 15:22

⁴1 Corinthians 15:51–54

⁵1 Corinthians 15:55–57

With our hearts comforted and strengthened with this truth, let us walk on in the love of Christ. Let us look forward to the day when we will be reunited with our cherished ones in the loving embrace of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[If the deceased was a believer, it is appropriate to speak of his/her faith at this point.]

By faith, _____ (full name) accepted Jesus Christ as his/her personal Savior. He/she knew that his/her life had been taken up into the life of Jesus, that he/she had died in Jesus' death, been raised in Jesus' resurrection, and ascended to the Father's right hand in Jesus' ascension.

(First name) lived by Paul's words, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.... For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."⁶

Christ was _____ (first name)'s life. (Provide here a short summary of the Christian life of the deceased.)

This is the hope and truth by which _____ (first name) lived. This is the hope and truth by which we all may take part in the life our Father has given to every one of us in the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died."⁷

⁶ Colossians 3:1–4

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 NRSV

From the foundation of the world, the Father planned in Jesus Christ an eternal and joyful future for humanity. May we keep this vision of the future alive in our hearts:

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”⁸

Affirmation of Hope in Christ

If the deceased was a believer, include:

“By faith, [full name] entrusted their life to Jesus Christ. Their story is now part of his story — in his death and resurrection. [Name] lived with the hope that Christ is making all things new.”

Prayer

“Faithful God, we thank you for the life of [Name]. We are grateful for the love shared and the memories made. Comfort those who mourn. Give us hope through your Son, Jesus Christ, who conquered death and leads us to life everlasting. Amen.”

⁸Revelation 21:1–4

Closing Music (Optional)

Benediction

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen.”

V. Interment (Optional)

If the body is to be interred following the service, the officiant may say:

“As we lay to rest the body of [full name], we remember the promise: ‘When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.’ May this truth give us comfort and strength.”

Interment Prayer

“Father in heaven, in the hope of the resurrection we commend to you our brother/sister [Name]. Wipe our tears, ease our hearts, and surround us with your love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”



Church Building Dedication

I. Purpose

This ceremony honors the gift of a physical space for worship and ministry. We recognize that while buildings are temporary, they are tools God uses to gather, send, and form his people. Dedicating a building to God is an opportunity to express gratitude, to remember the mission we are called to, and to commit ourselves afresh to faithful participation in God's work within the community.

II. Instructions and Structure Overview

- **Officiant:** A pastor, elder, or designated leader may lead this service. Involve local leadership and guests as appropriate.
- **Setting:** This may take place during a worship service, special gathering, or community celebration.
- **Tone:** Worshipful, joyful, rooted in gratitude and mission.
- **Adaptation:** Sections may be personalized with stories of the local congregation, building history, and regional practices.
- **Optional Elements:** Ribbon cutting, plaque unveiling, community meal, song or music, participation from civic leaders.

III. Ceremony Template

A. Welcome

- Welcome the congregation, special guests, community partners, and leaders.
- Acknowledge those who have supported, funded, or labored to bring the building to completion.

- Example:

“We welcome each of you to this special moment of celebration and dedication. We give thanks to God for the many hands, hearts, and prayers that brought this building into being.”

B. Opening Prayer

- Begin with a prayer of thanksgiving and acknowledgment of God’s presence and provision.

- Example:

“Faithful God, thank you for your generosity and guidance. We offer this moment to you with grateful hearts. May your Spirit fill this place and guide our gathering today.”

- Optional Scripture:
 - Romans 11:36
 - 1 John 5:14–15
 - Hebrews 3:4

C. Congregational Reflection & History

- Reflect on:
 - The congregation’s story and spiritual journey
 - The purpose of the building (worship, community outreach, fellowship)
 - The symbolism of dedicating space to God’s work
- Local leader shares the history of the congregation and journey to this new building.

- Example themes:
 - “From brush arbors to brick walls, God gathers us to himself.”
 - “This space is not sacred because of architecture, but because of the people who meet here in Christ.”
 - This building stands as a signpost of belonging, where all are invited into the life of Christ.”
 - “Not a fortress, but a lighthouse. We are called to shine the light of Christ in this neighborhood.”
 - “This is the place we gather to be reminded that God is with us, and to be sent out in his name.”
- Optional Scriptures:
 - Ephesians 2:19–22
 - 1 Kings 8:27
 - 1 Corinthians 3:9
 - Hebrews 3:6

D. Dedication Prayer

- The officiant leads in a prayer dedicating the building and its use to God.
- Sample prayer:

“God of light, we dedicate this building to you. May it be a place of welcome and worship, of healing and hope, of equipping and sending. Let every gathering here reflect your love and truth. May your name be honored in all that takes place within and beyond these walls.”

E. Symbolic Action (Optional)

- **Ribbon Cutting:** Invite a church leader, founding member, or special guest to cut the ribbon.
- **Plaque Unveiling:** Unveil a commemorative sign or dedication plaque.

“This building is a home base, not a holding place. May what starts here reach the neighborhood and the nations.”

G. Closing Prayer and Benediction

- Bless the building, ministries, and people.
- Example prayer:

“Gracious God, bless this congregation as they live out their calling from this place. May this building serve as a shelter of peace, a training ground for discipleship, and a beacon of your kingdom. Fill it with your presence and purpose. Amen.”

- Optional Benediction:

“Go now in peace. Let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and glorify our Father in heaven.”

- Optional Scripture:
 - Matthew 5:16
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31
 - 1 John 1:7



Retirement Recognition

I. Purpose

This retirement recognition is a suggested celebratory message or ceremony to honor someone who has faithfully served a local church or ministry within Grace Communion International. It provides a way for the community to express gratitude for their years of service and to affirm their continued value and calling as a disciple of Jesus.

II. Instructions

- **Who may lead:** A pastor or lay leader may officiate.
- **Setting:** Best held during a worship gathering or church celebration.
- **Tone:** Warm, celebratory, and personal.
- **Customization:** Add details about the retiree's specific role, contributions, and personality. Invite others to share stories or blessings as appropriate.

III. Ceremony Template

A. Welcome

“Welcome! Today we are celebrating and honoring **[retiree's full name]**, who has dedicated [number] years of faithful service to Grace Communion International and to this congregation. We are gathered to express our appreciation and recognize the impact of that service in the life of our community.”

B. Opening Prayer and Scripture

Suggested Scripture:

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2–3

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

“Gracious God, we thank you for your presence among us today as we honor [retiree’s first name]. Thank you for the years of faithful service you have empowered through your Spirit. Thank you for the gifts you have poured into [him/her], and for the love with which [he/she] has served this church. May this celebration bring joy and encouragement, and may your blessing rest on [his/her] future. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

C. Words of Encouragement

The officiant may share a reflection using these key themes and analogies:

- **Retirement is a transition, not an ending.** The retiree is not stepping away from their identity as a disciple but stepping into a new season of ministry and life.
- **Service leaves a mark.** Like a favorite pair of well-worn shoes, the years of labor have shaped their character and brought comfort and strength to others.
- **God sees lasting value.** The retiree is not diminished by retirement but continues to grow in grace, usefulness, and witness.

Optional metaphors or illustrations:

- Passing the baton, highlighting the continuation of ministry across generations.
- A sports team retiring a jersey to honor an outstanding player.
- A tree planted by streams of water, offering steady shade and fruit over many seasons.
- A lantern carried through dark places, now shared to guide and encourage others.
- A well-worn book filled with stories of grace, still teaching and inspiring the community.
- A servant's towel, symbolizing years of humble and faithful ministry.
- Examples of retirees who found new ways to serve and inspire.

Suggested Scriptures:

- 1 Peter 4:10
- Ephesians 2:10
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11

D. Blessing Prayer

“Father, we thank you again for [retiree's name]. As [he/she] enters this new season, we ask that you bless [his/her] days with joy, purpose, and renewed strength. May [he/she] continue to walk in your love and serve in ways that bring light to others. We entrust the future to your care, confident in your goodness and provision. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

E. Benediction

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will. May he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20–21

Closing Words:

“We celebrate all that God has done through [retiree’s name], and we are eager to see what exciting future lies ahead. The best is yet to come.”

Optional Additional Scriptures:

- Hebrews 12:1–2
- Hebrews 10:19–25



Part 3 — Seasonal Worship Liturgies

These worship elements are provided as examples to help congregations highlight special days in the annual Christian calendar. For churches that follow the Revised Common Lectionary, which GCI encourages, the themes of these days are already reflected in the music, Scripture readings, and sermon. These additional moments of worship offer another way to draw attention to the theme and invite meaningful participation through responsive readings and prayer.

These elements are designed to be woven into a regular worship service. We recommend placing them after the opening song or songs. They may be led by an elder or by a lay member of the congregation. More than one person may participate if it serves the flow of worship.

The materials can be used exactly as written. However, we encourage pastors and leaders to adapt them in ways that honor the congregation's culture, voice, and worship style. Any adaptations that are made should remain consistent with GCI's theology and teaching. For additional guidance, see the Introduction in this guide

Additional information about worship services can be found at this link:

<https://resources.gci.org/worship>.



Advent

Advent means “coming” or “arrival” and is a season where we celebrate the birth of Jesus and look forward to his second coming. Advent spans the four weeks preceding Christmas, and each week highlights a different theme. A common way to highlight the theme of the week is by lighting an Advent Wreath at the start of each service of Advent.

Advent Wreath

The advent wreath, which is made of evergreens, points to the hope we have in God and signifies eternity and continuous life. The Incarnation of the Son of God did not end 12 days after Christmas, or at the cross. The Son of God became the Son of Man for eternity. The circle of the wreath — which has no beginning or end — symbolizes the everlasting love God has for us and the everlasting life we have in Christ.

Advent Candles

The four candles represent the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Jesus Christ. There are different understandings of what the four candles represent. The most common themes are Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Other themes may be Expectation, Hope, Joy, and Purity, or Promise, Preparation, Peace, and Adoration. In GCI Equipper, we focus on the common themes.

Three of the candles are blue or purple, symbolizing royalty — which is fitting as we begin Advent focusing on Jesus returning as King of kings and Lord of Lords. The pink candle symbolizes rejoicing, as we anticipate the celebration of his birth and what it means to us and to the world.

The center candle is white and it reminds us that Christ is the light of the world; he is the light shining in the midst of darkness. He is Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Additional resources for Advent can be found on the GCI website in the Hope Avenue section and the GCI Equipper.

Here is a link to get you started:

<https://resources.gci.org/2022/10/avenue-resources-advent-resources>



Advent 1 Hope

Advent Wreath Lighting

Opening Remarks

On this first week of Advent, we celebrate Jesus who is our Hope. He came to earth in humility, as had been promised through the centuries. We live in hopeful anticipation of his return in glory.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Isaiah 64:1–9 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 80:1–7, 19–19;
1 Corinthians 1:3–9; Mark 13:24–37

Responsive Reading from Psalm 25:1–5 NIV

Leader: In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.

All: I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

Leader: No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.

All: Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting

Today we light the first candle of the Advent wreath. This is the candle of **HOPE**. With Christians around the world, we use this light to help us prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of God's Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

May we receive God's light as we hear the words of the prophet Isaiah:

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. ([Isaiah 9:2, 6-7](#))

Let us pray:

Lord, as we look to the birth of Jesus, grant that your light and love will overflow to the lives of those around us. Prepare our hearts for the joy and gladness of your coming, for Jesus is our hope. Amen.

Optional — Sing first verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel; And ransom captive Israel.

That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

Romans 15:13 NIV — May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Advent 2 Peace

Advent Wreath Lighting

Opening Remarks

On this second week of Advent, we celebrate Jesus, who is our peace. More than just the absence of conflict, the peace Jesus offers brings healing and redemption, and wholeness in him.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Isaiah 40:1–11 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13; 2 Peter 3:8–15a; Mark 1:1–8

Responsive Reading from Psalm 25:1–5 NIV

Leader: I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants — but let them not turn to folly.

All: Surely his salvation is near for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Leader: Love and faithfulness meet each other; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

All: Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Leader: The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.

All: Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting

Last week we lit the candle of **HOPE**. We will relight that candle, and in addition, we will light the candle for the second Sunday of Advent. This is the candle of **PEACE**. As we prepare for the coming of Jesus, we remember that Jesus is our hope and our peace.

We will read from the prophet Isaiah, and the apostle John:

A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” [Isaiah 40:3–5](#)

The words of Jesus from the Gospel of John:

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.
[John 14:27](#)

Let us pray:

Gracious God, grant that we may receive the peace Jesus offers as we prepare for our Lord’s birth. May divisions among us and with others be overcome by the Peace of Jesus. May this peace be witnessed to in all our cities and in all the countries of the world. Help us see the paths of peace the Holy Spirit is working in our lives and then give us courage to follow them. Lord, let us remember that you only are the giver of lasting peace and that you are always with us. Amen.

Optional — Sing first verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things far and nigh;

To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 NIV — May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.



Advent 3 Joy

Advent Wreath Lighting

Opening Remarks

On this third week of Advent, we come together in joy to fix our eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross so that we may become children of God.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24; John 1:6–8, 19–28

Responsive Reading from 146:5–10 NIV

Leader: Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.

All: He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them — he remains faithful forever.

Leader: He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free,

All: The Lord gives sight to the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

Leader: The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the way of the wicked.

All: The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the Lord!

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting

We relight the first candles of the Advent wreath — the candle of **HOPE** and the candle of **PEACE**. Now we light the third candle of Advent. This is the candle of **JOY**. As the coming of Jesus, our Savior, draws nearer, our joy builds with our anticipation of his birth.

From the Book of Isaiah, we read the words of our Lord:

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. [**Isaiah 65:18**](#)

From the New Testament, the words of Paul to the people of the church at Galatia:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” [**Galatians 5:22–25**](#)

Let us pray:

We joyfully praise you, O Lord, for the fulfillment of your promise of a Savior and your presence in our lives. Thank you for the gift of salvation through the Incarnation of your Son. Create us anew as we wait and help us see your glory as you fill our lives with your living Spirit. Amen.

Optional — Sing verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer, our spirits by thine advent here

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

Jude 24–25 NIV — To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.



Advent Wreath Lighting

Opening Remarks

On this fourth week of Advent, we gather to celebrate Jesus, who is love and came down in the Incarnation to live a perfect life of love and conquer darkness and death. In love, Christ made himself nothing in order to become human and take the nature of a servant.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Isaiah 7:10–16 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19; Romans 1:1–7;
Matthew 1:18–25

Responsive Reading from 1:46b–55 NIV

Leader: My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God
my Savior,

All: for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all
generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for
me — holy is his name.

Leader: His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation.

All: He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who
are proud in their inmost thoughts.

Leader: He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

All: He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting

Today we see the first three candles of the Advent Wreath will be lit — the candles of **HOPE, PEACE, and JOY**. Now we light the fourth candle of Advent. This is the candle of LOVE. Jesus' self-giving love was displayed in his life and ministry as the Good Shepherd. Advent reminds us that God comes in Jesus to love us to the end. It is a time to love with God's love as a response to God giving us his most precious gift. Since God is love, let us participate in his love also.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, we find these words:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

[**\(Deuteronomy 10:17–19a\)**](#)

From the Gospel of John, we hear these words from our Lord:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

[**\(John 13:34–35\)**](#)

Let us pray:

Teach us to love, O Lord. May we always remember to put you first as we follow Christ's footsteps, that we may know your love and show it in our lives. As we prepare for our celebration of Jesus' birth, also fill our hearts with love for the world, that all may know your love and the one whom you have sent, your Son, our Savior. Amen.

Optional — Sing a verse of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;

Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with
heaven's peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

1 Thessalonians 3:12–13 NIV — May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our god and Father when our Lord comes with all his holy ones.



Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

(May include Advent wreath with Christ candle lighting)

Opening Remarks

We gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus, who is the light of the world. This light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Isaiah 9:2–7 NIV

Optional Readings: Titus 2:11–14; Luke 2:1–14, (15–20)

Responsive Reading from Psalm 98 NIV

Leader: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

All: The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

Leader: He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

All: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music.

Leader: Make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,

All: With trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn — shout for joy before the Lord, the King.

Leader: Let the sea resound and everything in it, the world all who live in it.

All: Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting

As we begin our Christmas celebration, celebrating Jesus' birth, we light the final candle of the Advent wreath. First, we lit the candle for Hope because Jesus is our hope. Second, we lit the candle for Peace because Jesus is our peace. Third, we lit the candle for Joy because Jesus brings joy and fourth, the candle for Love because Jesus is the love of the Father given to us. Today we light the center candle. This is the Christ candle. Jesus our savior is born. Jesus has come to us from the Father — he continues to come to us today by the Spirit and He will come again in the future in power and glory.

Here is a reading from Galatians:

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law” ([Galatians 4:4](#))

Let us pray:

Great God of love and light, we thank you now for the light of that special star over two thousand years ago that guided humble shepherds and learned wise men to the holy babe. Lead us now, by the light of your love, that we also may follow you to new life in him. In celebration of the birth of our King and our Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Optional — Sing four verses of O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel; And ransom captive Israel.

That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer, our spirits by thine advent here

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put
to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;

Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

Suggested candle lighting to end worship service for Christmas Eve:

Distribute candles to each member of congregation as they arrive. Conclude service with a congregational singing of Silent Night. The pastor or worship leader lights their candle with the flame from the Christ candle at the center of the advent wreath and then lights the candle of someone in the audience. That person then lights the candle of the person beside them. This continues until each candle has been lit.

Suggested benediction for end of service for Christmas Day:

2 Corinthians 13:14 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.



Preface

Epiphany Sunday, also known as Three Kings Day, commemorates Jesus' visitation and worship by the Magi. Epiphany Sunday begins the Epiphany season where God's revelation to the world through Jesus is celebrated. This day is celebrated on January 6, or on the Sunday closest to this date.

Opening Remarks

Welcome, beloved of God, to the beginning of our celebration of the Epiphany season — the shining forth of Christ's light to every nation and people. Today we remember the Magi, who journeyed far by starlight, trusting that God's sign would lead them to the newborn King. We, too, come seeking, sometimes with questions or uncertainty, yet confident that Christ continues to give us a revelation of who his Father is, answering our deepest questions and growing our faith in him by the Spirit.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Matthew 2:1–12 NIV

Optional Readings: Isaiah 60:1–6; Psalm 72:1–7, 10–14;
Ephesians 3:1–12

Responsive Reading from Isaiah 60:1–6 NIV

Leader: Arise, shine, for your light has come

Congregation: And the glory of the Lord rises upon you

Leader: See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples,

Congregation: But the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

Leader: Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you;

Your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip.

Congregation: Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy;

The wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.

Leader: Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah.

And all from Sheba will come, bearing incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

Congregation: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

Prayer/Response

Leader: On this day of Epiphany, we remember the travelers who followed a star and found Christ, the true Light of the world. The same God who set a star in the sky still guides seekers today. The Father delights to reveal himself, Jesus is the gift who meets us on the way, and the Holy Spirit is the steady light that points to Jesus, growing and sustaining our trust in the Lord.

(Invite participants to pray, asking God to strengthen their trust as they follow his light and thanking God for the surprising ways his light has appeared in their lives. Then pause for silent prayer.)

All: Jesus, Light of the world, reveal your presence in our lives. Make us radiant with your love and steady in your guidance by the Spirit, so that we may faithfully point others to you where God's glory is revealed.

Suggested Benediction at the end of worship:

Ephesians 3:20–21 NIV — Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.



Easter Preparation (Lent)

Preface

Easter Preparation, or the Lenten Season, is a time to prepare for Easter. It commemorates Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the desert. In preparation for the celebration of Easter, Christians often set aside extra time dedicated to prayer, fasting and repentance to align their lives more fully on who God is and who we are in relationship with him as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Opening Remarks

Welcome, beloved of God, to this season of Easter Preparation. Easter Preparation recalls Jesus' forty days of fasting in the wilderness, where he resisted temptation and faithfully depended on the Father in our stead and on our behalf. The Father calls us to a surrendered life that restores and reconciles, the Son provides the response of faithful obedience, and the Holy Spirit strengthens us to live it out. We are invited to turn from whatever pulls us away from God and to give our full attention to the One who restores and renews.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Matthew 4:1–11 NIV

Optional Readings: Isaiah 58:6–9, Psalm 51:1–12, Psalm 139:23–24;
Matthew 6:16–19

Responsive Reading from Joel 2:12–13 NIV

Leader: “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

All: Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Congregational Prayer/Response

Leader: Holy and gracious God, you formed us in love and call us back to yourself. As we enter this season of Easter Preparation, we come with open hearts. You know our broken places and the longings we can hardly name. Meet us here with your mercy.

Invite participants to pray, asking God to call them out of hiding and into his renewing presence. (Pause for silent prayer.)

All: Thank you, Lord, for calling us out of hiding and sustaining us by your grace and mercy as you lead us through the wilderness, creating in us a pure heart and renewing steadfast spirit within us.

Suggested Benediction for end of service:

2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 NIV — May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. Amen.



Preface

Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and signals the start of Holy Week. The crowd that cheered Jesus on this day would soon be jeering him on his way to the cross.

Opening Remarks

Welcome, beloved of God, to Palm Sunday. Today we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem — a moment of both praise and mystery. The crowd hoped for a conquering king, but Jesus came in humility, riding on a donkey, showing that God's triumph is primarily gentle and life-giving. We gather to lay down our own expectations and to watch for the kingdom Jesus reveals. May we listen, meditate, and follow as he leads us toward the cross and the life beyond it.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Matthew 21:1–11 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29 NIV

Responsive Reading from Psalm 36:5–10 NIV

Leader: Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

All: Your righteousness is like the highest mountains; your justice like the great deep. You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.

Leader: How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

All: They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.

Leader: For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

All: Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright of heart!

Prayer/Response

Leader: Jesus' actions on Palm Sunday challenge our concept of what true power is. Crowds once shouted "Hosanna!" hoping Jesus would conquer with force. We too can be drawn to displays of strength that are nothing like Jesus. Yet our King enters humbly, riding a borrowed donkey, showing that God's kingdom is built on love, not coercion.

Invite participants to pray, asking God to reveal where they may be drawn to false versions of power and to renew their trust in Jesus and his humble reign. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: Gracious God, we gather in praise and awe as we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. We wave our palms and lift our voices, yet we know your triumph is deeper than cheering crowds. Father, open our eyes to see your kingdom's gentle power. Jesus, humble King, open our hearts to receive your overflowing love. Holy Spirit, lead us to lay down every expectation that keeps us from Jesus. Prepare our hearts for the journey through Holy Week, that we may walk with Christ in humility and rise with him in joy. Amen.

All: Jesus, humble King, we welcome you. Teach us to attune our attention to your lead, to release false ideas of power, and to receive your way of overflowing love. Keep us near you during the mystery of Holy Week until we rejoice in the life of Easter. Amen.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

Numbers 6:24–26 NIV — The Lord bless 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.



Maundy Thursday

Preface

Maundy Thursday draws us into the revelation of a love that suffers for the sake of the world. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus shared a final meal with his disciples, washed their feet, and gave them a new command to love one another — all while knowing betrayal and abandonment were already in motion.

Opening Remarks

Welcome, beloved of God, to Maundy Thursday. Tonight, we gather in the quiet of Holy Week to remember the night Jesus shared a final meal with his friends, washed their feet, and gave them a new command to love one another. He did all this, knowing betrayal and suffering were near. We come with hearts full of gratitude, ready to receive his overflowing love, a love passed to others

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Exodus 12:1–14 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26;
John 13

Responsive Reading from Psalm 117 NIV

Leader: Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples.

All: For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord.

Prayer

Leader: On this last night before his death, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, foreshadowing the sacrificial love they would see on the cross. He also instructed them to serve others and to love each other in the same way that he loved them.

Invite participants to pray, thanking Jesus for his sacrificial love and asking the Spirit to empower us to love others with the same sacrificial love he pours out on us. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: Lord, may we receive your love and pass it on to each other in all we say and do, bearing witness to you as your disciples.

No benediction for end of service.

Note: It is appropriate to partake of communion during the Maundy Thursday service. Some congregations may also want to include a foot washing ceremony. See this link for more information:

<https://www.gci.org/articles/communion/>



Good Friday Worship

Preface

Good Friday is the day of Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus willingly laid down his life for us, conquering sin, death and evil so that we may have life everlasting.

Opening Remarks

Welcome, beloved of God, to Good Friday. We gather in the shadow of the cross, remembering the night when Jesus was betrayed, condemned, and crucified. This is a day of deep reflection and profound gratitude, for in Jesus we see the triune God's unwavering desire to be with us and to heal us. As we listen, pray, and wait in stillness, may our hearts be opened to the One who calls us friends.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Isaiah 52:13–53:12 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 22, Hebrews 10:16–25, John 18:1–19:42

Responsive Reading from Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9 NIV

Leader: Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

All: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Leader: During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the One who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

All: Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Prayer/Response

Leader: We call this Friday “good” not because suffering is good, but because God’s goodness meets our deepest need. Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before him — the joy of restoring all creation. In his final prayer, he asked that we would be one with him and with the Father, wrapped in love for all eternity.

Invite participants to pray, thanking God for the unity we have with each other in Christ, and asking him to open their hearts to receive this unity. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: Holy Father, thank you for making us one with you, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

No benediction at end of service.

 Holy Saturday

Preface

On Holy Saturday, Jesus lay dead in the tomb. Quiet and stillness mark the time between Jesus' death and resurrection. We pause and wait; in sorrow because of Jesus' death, but we also wait in hope for the promised resurrection.

Opening Remarks

Welcome. Today, we gather in stillness. We are held in the space between the cross and the empty tomb. This is a quiet time, filled with questions and longing. As we enter into this moment, we do so with open hearts, willing to wait in trust that God's love holds us even here.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Lamentations 3:1–2, 19–24 NIV

Optional Readings: Job 1:1–14; 1 Peter 4:1–8; John 19:38–42

Responsive Reading from Psalm 31:1–4, 15–16 NIV

Leader: In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; never let me be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

All: Turn your ear to me; come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.

Leader: Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name, lead me
and guide me. Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge.

All: My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

Prayer/Response

Leader: On Holy Saturday, we meet the Lord of life lying in a tomb. It is a day when nothing seems to happen, yet everything is being held by God. Just as Jesus' followers must have been heartbroken and confused by his absence, we also have times when our path forward is unclear and when God seems far away. It is important to remember that God is present in this space and he continues to work in us.

Invite participants to pray, asking God to be strengthened in the waiting and filled with hope for what God is doing in them. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: Loving God, today we sit in silence. We remember that you know what it means to die. You know what it means to be placed in a tomb. Empower us to wait with you in this stillness. Give us hope to face sorrow and trust in your promises. Amen.

Leader: We wait in hope for the Lord.

All: God is our help and our strength.

Leader: The night feels long.

All: But joy will come in the morning.

No benediction for end of service. Ask participants to exit in silence to sit in the weight of what has been remembered and proclaimed.



Easter Sunday

Preface

On Easter, we celebrate our risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Jesus is victorious over sin, death, and all evil. The fulfillment of God's promise is beyond what we dared hope. Our Savior has conquered the grave!

Opening Remarks

Christ is risen; he is risen indeed! The stone is rolled away, and the tomb is empty today! We rejoice that Jesus, our risen Lord, has conquered sin and death. He accomplished in his resurrection what no human could. We cannot save ourselves through human effort. But Jesus offers true freedom. In him, we are set free from the bondage of sin, the fear of death and the dominion of evil. Let us rejoice and be glad in the God of our salvation!

Scriptures

Primary Reading: John 20:1–18 NIV

Optional Readings: Matthew 28:1–10; Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24;
Acts 10:34–43, 1 Corinthians 15:19–26

Responsive Reading from Psalm 118:1–2, 14–16, 19–24 NIV

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever!

All: Let Israel say, “His love endures forever. The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.

Leader: Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: “The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!

All: The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"

Leader: Open for me the gates of righteousness, I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

All: This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous may enter.

Leader: I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

All: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Leader: The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

All: The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice and be glad.

Prayer/Response

Leader: Hear the good news: nothing is beyond God's renewing power. The same love that sent Jesus to the cross and raised him to life is at work in you and in all creation. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Invite participants to pray, thanking God for the eternal life we have because Jesus died on the cross and rose again. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: People of God, let us rejoice together in the new life Christ has given.

Leader: Christ is risen!

All: He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Leader: Glory to God who gives us new life through Jesus Christ!

All: Glory to God who gives us new life through Jesus Christ!

Suggested benediction for end of service:

Hebrews 13:20–21 NIV — Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything food for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



Ascension Sunday

Preface

Ascension Sunday celebrates Jesus who ascended back to heaven to take his place at the right hand of the Father, where he reigns as our King and high priest forever.

Opening Remarks

Welcome, beloved of God. On this Ascension Sunday, we gather to remember when the resurrected Jesus, in the flesh, blessed his gathered community and ascended to the heavens to sit at the right hand of his Father. We are invited to anticipate the arrival of the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promised to send. Let us lift our eyes and our spirits to the One who ascended in glory and remains with us always.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Acts 1:1–11 NIV

Optional Readings: Luke 24:44–53, Psalm 47, Psalm 93,
Ephesians 1:15–23; Hebrews 4:14–20

Responsive Reading from Psalm 47:1–8 NIV

Leader: Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

All: For the Lord Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth.

Leader: He subdued nations under us and peoples under our feet.
He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loved.

All: God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid the sounding
of trumpets. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King,
sing praises.

Leader: For God is the King of all the earth.

All: Sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.

Prayer/Response

Leader: On this Ascension Sunday, we fix our eyes on Jesus, our Lord who has ascended into heaven as our great high priest. May we open our hearts to the presence of the triune God who fills all things. We offer our lives to Christ who reigns with mercy and sends us into the world as witnesses of love.

Invite participants to pray, thanking the Father for sending Jesus, who ascended to heaven so that he can fill the world with his presence through the Holy Spirit.
(Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: Lord, thank you that your Ascension does not mark an end of your work, but rather a beginning of a work that will spread throughout all the world as you reign in glory.

All: Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

Ephesians 1:17–19 NRSV — (May) the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.



Pentecost Worship

Preface

Pentecost Sunday commemorates the receiving of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church. Just as the Pentecost celebration in the Old Testament was a harvest festival, Pentecost in the New Testament marks the start of a spiritual harvest. The birth of the Church and the subsequent sharing of the gospel is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth.

Opening Remarks

Pentecost Sunday is the celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the Church. Jesus did not leave his disciples alone when he ascended. He promised to send them the Holy Spirit as a Helper, a Comforter, an Advocate, and an Intercessor. Jesus didn't leave us on our own to figure things out for ourselves after his ascension. He left us the gift of the Holy Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are united with Christ. He is more than just an example for us to follow. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to participate in the life of Christ.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Acts 2:1–21 NIV

Optional Readings: Ezekiel 37:1–14, Psalm 104:24–34, 35b,
Romans 8:22–27, John 15:26–27, 16:5–15

Responsive Reading from John 16:5a, 7b–15 NIV

Leader: Now, I am going to him who sent me. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you;

All: But if I go, I will send him to you.

Leader: When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

All: I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Leader: He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.

All: All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.

Prayer/Response

Leader: Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit, allowing him to guide us into all truth. The Holy Spirit, sent from the Father, testifies about who Jesus is so that we may testify to all the world about the good news that Jesus is for all people.

Invite participants to pray, asking the Spirit to lead and guide them into all truth, especially the truth of who Jesus is for all humankind so that all may be empowered by the Holy Spirit to boldly proclaim the gospel. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: Let us pray together:

All: Thank you, Father, for sending your Spirit in the name of Jesus to teach us all things and remind us who you are. Thank you for our Advocate, to help us and be with us forever — the Spirit of Truth.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

Romans 15:13 NIV — May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Preface

Trinity Sunday is a Christian feast day celebrating the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. It is observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost, with celebrations often including special prayers, readings of creeds like the Athanasian Creed, and hymns that focus on the unity of God in three persons. The day is dedicated to reflecting on the mystery of the Trinity and giving thanks for God's work in creation, salvation, and comfort.

Opening Remarks

Today, we celebrate the mystery of our triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — who has existed in perfect communion before time began. We acknowledge that this mystery is beyond our comprehension, yet we are invited to know the Father personally through the Holy Spirit. Let us turn our hearts to God and receive his word through Scripture.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: John 14:8–17, 25–27 NIV

Optional Readings: Genesis 1:1–2:4a, Romans 5:1–5, 2 Corinthians 13:14

Responsive Reading from Romans 5:1–5

Leader: Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we now stand.

Leader: And we boast in our hope of the glory of God.

All: This hope will not disappoint us.

Leader: Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

All: We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Congregational Prayer and Response

Leader: On this Trinity Sunday we are drawn into the unity and love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This divine communion calls us to reconciliation and peacemaking in our relationships, our communities, and the world.

Invite participants to pray, offering themselves to God and asking to be formed in the unity and love of the Trinity. (Allow time for silent prayer.)

Leader: Gracious God, receive these commitments and seal them by your Spirit. Keep us faithful as your people, living and loving in the communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

All: Here we are, Lord. Make us one in your love.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

2 Corinthians 13:14 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.



Christ the King Sunday

Preface

Christ the King Sunday, also referred to as the Reign of Christ Sunday, falls on the last Sunday of the liturgical calendar just before Advent. Christ the King Sunday acknowledges that Jesus is the supreme ruler of the universe and his reign extends throughout all space and time, overcoming all national and political boundaries and any other boundaries created by man.

Opening Remarks

Welcome, beloved citizens of God's kingdom. On this Christ the King Sunday, we gather to celebrate Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords. He is our good king, and the foundation of his kingdom of peace is his mercy and grace. His kingship is beyond compare as he ascended to his throne by way of a cross and wore a crown of thorns signifying a reign marked by sacrificial love. In a world of shifting rulers and loud claims to authority, we trust the One who holds all things together and reigns over all creation with a love that cannot be broken.

Scriptures

Primary Reading: Colossians 1:15–20 NIV

Optional Readings: Psalm 100, John 18:33–37, Philippians 2:5–11, Revelation 1:4–8, Revelation 21:1–6

Responsive Reading from Psalm 100 NIV

Leader: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

All: Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Leader: Know that the Lord is God.

All: It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Leader: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

All: For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Congregational Prayer and Response

Leader: On this Christ the King Sunday, we humbly bow before Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. We long for every part of our lives — our decisions, relationships, work, and witness — to be transformed by Christ for living in his kingdom.

Invite participants to pray, asking God to reign in their lives and transform them into citizens of his kingdom. (Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being King of all creation, and for rescuing us from the dominion of darkness and making us your holy people in your kingdom of light.

All: May we live a life worthy of you, Lord, and please you in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. Strengthen us with all power according to your glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience.

Suggested benediction for end of service:

Colossians 3:15 NRSV — And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.