

THE BRETHREN PASTOR'S HANDBOOK  
*2019 Edition*

*“But Let All Things Be Done Decently And In Order”*

– 1 COR. 14:40





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Prefaces for All Editions
3	The Church
12	Baptism
14	Confirmation
16	Membership in the Brethren Church
26	The Communion Service
32	The Anointing Service
35	Call, Commissioning, Licensing, and Ordination Procedures of Pastors and Elders
36	Ordination Service of an Elder
40	Service for Licensing or Commissioning a Minister
42	Election and Ordination of Deacons and Deaconesses
47	Ordination Service of Deacons
49	Public Dedication of Children Forms 1 and 2
52	Installation Service for Church School Workers and Officers – Forms 1 and 2
55	Suggested Aids for Dedication Services of Buildings, Etc.
59	Solemnizing Marriages
73	Ministry to the Sick
76	The Burial of the Dead

## *Prefaces for All Editions*

The minister's duties are so varied and frequently so pressing upon him that he welcomes, if he is an earnest and effective worker, every suggestion that offers help. There is scarcely a relation of human life, no matter how sacred and joyous or how tragic and distressful, into which a Pastor is not called to enter. Upon all such occasions, the individual resources frequently are too limited to make possible the best service. Here, again the faithful and sincere worker gladly accepts any help afforded. Once again, the administration of the affairs of the Church, the celebration of Ordinances and Sacraments of the Church, and the conducting of public and special services lays a heavy toll upon the skill of the Pastor and Preacher. The work of the minister should be carefully, prayerfully and decorously done. Beauty, order and harmony in the services, whatever their nature may be, will always attract people to the church. Dignity, spirituality and meaning will always edify. The right way will always be the best way. The one purpose of this HANDBOOK is expressed in the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 14:40. "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

The authors assume all responsibility for matter herein contained. We offer it to our Fellow-Pastors with the prayer that it may be useful and serviceable as a means toward greater efficiency in the work of the church. A book like this is to be used and not abused; in other words, every trained and judicious pastor will know how to adapt and use such a book as this to his needs upon any occasion.

J. ALLEN MILLER, G.W. RENCH, and DYOLL BELOTE

August 1924

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Reprint authorized August, 1941, preparation and responsibility for publishing same being delegated to the officers of the Association.

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The National Ministerial Association has authorized this 1974 printing of the HANDBOOK and it is a revision developed by the appointed committee: Albert Ronk (now deceased), George Solomon, and Charles Munson. Each section of the HANDBOOK was reviewed and revision was made where it was felt necessary by the following persons: Donald Rowser, W. Clayton Berkshire, Henry Bates, John Byler, Delbert Flora, Albert Ronk, Charles Lowmaster, C. William Cole, Phil Lersch, George Solomon, Spencer Gentle.

August 1974

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This 2004 print and electronic revision makes the existing handbook again available. The language and presentation of the previous edition is maintained, except where our denominational documents adopted and amended since the 1974 printing required changes. G. Emery Hurd, editor

August 2004

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This 2018 print and electronic edition updates the language and includes changes in the Manual of Procedure. Authorized by the Executive Board of the Brethren Church, it was updated and presented by the Brethren Documents Task Force; Joshua Coffee, chair; G. Emery Hurd, Fred Miller, Dale Stoffer, and Steven Cole, which was then adopted by the Executive Board of the Brethren Church

# *The Church*

## **I. General Statement**

*From the Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church, Chapter One, Section I. The Local Church ...*

### **Section 1. The Local Church**

Article 1. The Brethren Church is a body of baptized believers. The mode of receiving new believers into church membership is upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, repentance, baptism by trine immersion, and confirmation by the laying on of hands. Local churches at their option may receive believers who reaffirm their faith in Jesus Christ as saving Lord, who have been previously baptized by believers' baptism and who evidence a personal faith and walk in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Article 2. As a family of Brethren congregations, we corporately affirm and practice the following church ordinances: baptism of new believers by trine immersion; confirmation by the laying on of hands on newly baptized believers; threefold communion, consisting of footwashing, love feast, and the Eucharist of bread and cup; and anointing of the sick with oil.

Article 3. Church Plant.

The normal process for church development and recognition shall involve two stages: church plant and church. A church plant may be recognized by the Executive Board of General Conference following:

- A. Consensus of a group to both be a part of, and to support, The Brethren Church
- B. Recognition of a pastor who is under the oversight of the Regional Leadership Team
- C. An intentional relationship with a Brethren Church region and the Brethren Church National Office
- D. An agreed upon process of deployment and affiliation
- E. The recommendation of the Regional Leadership Team

A recognized church plant shall have the privileges and responsibilities afforded by General Conference, including ministerial and the minimum number of lay credentials granted to a church and the full support of regional and denominational ministries. A church plant shall follow the guidelines established by the Executive Board.

Article 4. Church. A church plant may become a church, with all privileges and responsibilities afforded by the General Conference, at such point as it:

A. Has sufficient members to assume responsibility for its own financial obligations

B. Has an established internal leadership team or board

C. Has a pastor who is under the oversight of the Regional Leadership Team

D. Is able to be a contributing partner to Brethren regional, national and global ministries in the estimation of the Regional Leadership Team.

The process for a church plant to be recognized as a church is as follows:

A. Members of a church plant vote as a majority to be recognized as a church and communicate that desire to the Regional Leadership Team

B. The Regional Leadership Team or its designee assesses with the church plant its readiness for recognition as a church

C. Upon their mutual agreement of readiness, the Regional Leadership Team recommends to the next General Conference that the church plant be recognized as a church

D. General Conference, by majority vote, affirms or refers back to the appropriate Regional Leadership Team the request for recognition as a church.

Article 5. The Brethren Church is a family of churches. Each local congregation has opportunities for input in corporate decisions. Each local congregation has moral and relational responsibilities to every other Brethren congregation. Therefore, each local congregation should support denominational ministries by participating in the General Conference of The Brethren Church and by providing funds for the ministries established by the delegates of General Conference.

Article 6. All local churches shall by proper and legal procedures provide that all property and assets shall revert to The Brethren Church, Inc., in the event that the local organization disbands, becomes disorganized, or ceases to use its property for and in the interest of The Brethren Church.

## **Section 2. Officers of the Church**

Article 1. The regular officers of the church are elder; licensed or commissioned pastor; and deacon and deaconess.

### **Section 3. Respective Duties of Officers**

Article 1. It shall belong to the elder or pastor to feed the flock of God by reading and expounding the Word of God; to administer the ordinances; to manage with other church officers the organization of all the subordinate work of the congregation; to visit the people from house to house and pray for and with them; to be devoted to the care of the poor, the sick and the dying; and, under the direction of the church, administer government and discipline. It shall also be the duty of the pastor, in so far as conscientiously possible, to encourage the people to supply themselves with the literature of the church; and to support loyally all the organizations and institutions of the church. The pastor shall keep a careful account of the work so as to supply the appropriate Regional Leadership Team and the General Conference with information concerning the pastorate, statistical, administrative or spiritual, and to leave to the successive pastor a particular account of the charge, including the names and standing of the members and their places of residence.

Article 2. It is the duty of the deacons and deaconesses to assist the pastor or elder in charge of a church in the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation as the scriptures indicate and the needs of the church require.

### **Section 4. Officers, How Called and Elected**

Article 1. Candidates for the gospel ministry shall be called by the congregation at a regular or special business meeting, and the results of said election shall be transmitted to the Regional Leadership Team by the congregation through the officer presiding at said election.

Article 2. Properly qualified persons shall be examined for and ordained to the eldership according to the provisions of Chapter Two, Section 4, Article 2A.

Article 3. Any local church may call a layperson to the work of a commissioned pastor at a regular or special business meeting. Such call shall be transmitted to the Regional Leadership Team for its consideration.

Article 4. Deacons and deaconesses may be elected in the following manner: After due public notice the church shall convene at the place appointed. The election shall be by ballot and three-fourths of the votes cast shall be necessary to an election. If no election is had on the first ballot, then a second ballot shall be taken, and so on until an election occurs or is postponed.

Article 5. Churches recognized according to Chapter One, Section 1, Article 4, shall elect and call a pastor in the following manner: After due public notice the church shall convene at the place of public worship. The election of a pastor shall proceed by ballot. It shall require a majority of votes cast to constitute a call, unless the church shall have previously determined that a two-thirds or three-fourths vote is necessary.



## **Section 5. Rights of Members**

Article 1. All members of a local church who are in full membership and enrolled in its active membership shall be eligible to vote in all transactions of the church, excepting in those states where there are legal restrictions regarding the voting of minors.

See A Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church, Chapter One, for additional information and guidance regarding the basic structure of the local church. The Brethren Church National Office has several models for church planting, and examples of Local Church Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws for consideration.

## **2. General Outline of Brethren Polity**

### **Limited Congregationalism**

As stated in the *Manual of Procedure*, “The Brethren Church recognizes the right of each local congregation to order its own affairs but seeks a common commitment on matters of faith and practice at the regional and denominational levels.” The Brethren Church comes together for matters of cooperative regional and global mission work, pastoral and congregational recognition and oversight, and for the common encouragement of the Brethren. Matters of local church governance and practice, within broad biblical boundaries, are under the sole purview of the local church. While the denomination may make recommendations and offer consultation on how to best organize and accomplish the work of the church at the local level, we recognize that often those who live in a particular area are best equipped to discover and participate in God’s plan for ministering to that area.

### **National and Regional Polity**

A full description of the authority and responsibilities of the National and Regional Brethren Church may be found in the *Manual of Procedure*. A summary of important aspects of these cooperative levels of the Brethren Church is provided here:

#### **The Regional Brethren Church**

##### *The Regional Leadership Team (RLT)*

This group is the place to go when you need guidance on denominational matters, need an outside arbiter to assist in settling disputes in the church, or just need help in general. They are responsible for the relational and organizational connection of the denominational structure

to local churches. They provide oversight for pastors and churches within their region, as well as help churches connect with each other.

#### *The Regional Resource Coordinator (RRC)*

This person is a member of the RLT who is appointed and employed, usually in a part time capacity, by the Executive Director of the Brethren Church, with consultation from the RLT. This person gives the RLT both someone who has dedicated hours to give to the work of the Region, and a direct connection to the national level of the Brethren Church.

#### *Camps*

District camps were a vital part of some of the old districts in the Brethren Church. In addition to running their own camping programs, many districts owned and operated their own campgrounds. With the transition to regions, these campgrounds are each becoming their own religious 501c3 organizations. As part of that change, most of these camps are setting up systems that will still give the Brethren churches of their regions control over the new organization. Depending on which Region you are a part of, your church may have some responsibilities to support, and an opportunity to benefit from, a camping program. The Brethren camping programs have served as an important piece in helping to shape our Brethren culture and train our churches, especially some of our younger members, in what it means to connect with Jesus in a deep and meaningful way.

## **The National Brethren Church**

#### *National Board of Oversight (NBO)*

The NBO will serve two primary functions. First, it gives the final examination and denominational approval for candidates for ordination to be ordained by their local churches. Second, it serves as an arbiter for disputes over major actions taken by RLTs. In addition to these primary tasks, the NBO will also work with RLTs to maintain a national list of ordained Elders.

#### *The Executive Director of the Brethren Church*

The Executive Director is hired by the Executive Board and affirmed by General Conference. The Executive Director's responsibilities include giving visionary leadership to the denomination, employing and utilizing national staff to accomplish the work of the denomination, appointing and overseeing Regional Resource Coordinators, and functioning as Chief Executive Officer of the Brethren Church, Inc.

#### *The Executive Board of the Brethren Church*

The Executive Board is elected by General Conference and serves as the decision-making body of the Brethren Church when General Conference is not in session. The Executive Board oversees the work of the Executive Director, proposes and adopts major policies, presents an annual denominational budget to General Conference for approval, is responsible for planning the meeting of General Conference, serves as the corporate board of the Brethren Church, Inc. and at all times acts under the direction and control of General Conference.

#### *General Conference of the Brethren Church*

General Conference is made up of ministerial, lay, and cooperative delegates. All ordained Elders and licensed and commissioned ministers in good standing in their local Brethren church are automatically recognized as seated delegates at the meeting of General Conference. These ministerial delegates then approve the slate of presented lay and cooperative delegates to make up the remainder of the membership of General Conference. General Conference is the highest authority on denominational matters in the Brethren Church and meets annually for celebration, fellowship, edification, and to discuss and enact any required business and organizational decisions.

#### *Committees, Boards, and Taskforces of General Conference*

To aid in its work, General Conference and the Executive Board may appoint groups to serve in a specific capacity. Standing Committees are formed by the General Conference and ~~having~~ have continuing responsibilities. Other Task Forces and Committees are established by the Executive Board for specific purposes and time frames. Regions may also form committees and task forces as needed.

### **Suggestions for Local Polity**

As noted above, the governance of the local affairs of a Brethren Congregation is under the discretion of the local church; however, to be in harmony with Brethren thought and practice, the following principles are proposed and required for the seating of delegates at the meeting of General Conference.

#### *Membership*

Membership in the church is granted following the profession of faith in Jesus, repentance, believer's baptism, and confirmation by the laying on of hands.

### *Communion*

Three-fold Communion is practiced by the observance of the love feast, the washing of the saints' feet, and the Eucharist of bread and cup.

While not required for seating of delegates, the following is also recommended for Brethren Churches in their local organization and practices.

### *Anointing the sick with oil*

Consistent with the practice given in James 5, elders of the local church are to care for the sick in anointing with oil and prayer.

### *Triune Immersion*

While a Brethren Church may admit into its membership believers that have been baptized by other modes of believer baptism, baptism in the Brethren Church is administered by triune immersion in remaining consistent with the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19 and the practice of the early church.

### *Officers of the church*

Elders, Licensed Ministers, and Commissioned Ministers:

Elders and Ministers are called by the local church. Candidates for ordination to Eldership are examined and approved by the Regional Leadership Team and the National Board of Oversight prior to ordination by the local church. Men and women who are in the process of ordination and have been approved for licensure are considered "Licensed Ministers" of the Brethren Church. Commissioned Ministers are affirmed by the Regional Leadership Team.

Pastors:

Churches may call a pastor, or pastors, to take up the responsibility "to feed the flock of God by reading and expounding the Word of God; to administer the ordinances; to manage with other church officers the organization of all the subordinate work of the congregation; to visit the people from house to house and pray for and with them; to be devoted to the care of the poor, the sick and the dying; and, under the direction of the church, administer government and discipline" (*Manual of Procedure*).

Deaconate:

Deacons and Deaconesses assist in the ministry of and to the church in temporal and spiritual matters.

And finally, a few notes about some historically important Brethren principles and how they affect local church polity-

The Brethren view the Pastor/Elder more as a role than a hierarchical position. The Pastor is always responsible and accountable to his or her church.

On the other hand, the Pastor is not simply an employee of the church with the responsibility to meet their every whim, but works first for Jesus as a minister of and to His Church.

Like the Pastor, every member of the body is accountable to the church and should be a minister of and to the church.

The church is a priesthood of believers and is at its best when it operates by consensus. Pastors and leaders are charged with leading by building consensus in decision-making and the body of the church is responsible to support the decisions of the church.

Hierarchical power is a tool of subjugation; relational influence can lead to freedom.

## **Auxiliaries**

There are currently two auxiliaries aligned with the Brethren Church.

### *Women Meant to Serve (WMS)*

The WMS has served as a vital ministry partner for the Brethren Church for a large portion of its history. In mobilizing Brethren women, the WMS has over the years been a leading supporter and contributor to global missions, church planting, ministry training, and benevolence ministries. Many local groups meet regularly for Bible study and fellowship.

### *National Association of Brethren Church Elders (NABCE)*

NABCE is the professional fellowship of ordained Elders in the Brethren Church and has historically served as the voice of the Eldership to General Conference, most often on theological and social issues. NABCE currently helps Brethren Elders and pastors connect with each other for prayer, encouragement, edification, and exhortation.

## **Denominational Financing**

Brethren churches are requested to “tithe” 10% of their regularly collected tithes and offerings toward the cooperative programs of the Brethren Church. While many denominations require 15% or more of their local churches’ income to be given to regional and national work, the Brethren like

to give their churches more freedom in how they participate in and support the larger work of the denomination.

Churches are encouraged to give 1% of their regularly collected tithes and offerings to Ashland University for use in the area of student Christian ministries and 1% to Ashland Theological Seminary to aid in the training of Brethren pastors and leaders. Additionally, Brethren churches and individuals are encouraged to find ministries that resonate with their heart and give themselves to supporting them through finances and their efforts.

# Baptism

*(Note.—it is advisable that prior to the ordinance of Baptism that the pastor has had an opportunity to speak with the candidate to assure their understanding of the significance of the ordinance, their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and receive instruction on how the service will proceed. These instructions should include the particular procedure within the congregation, including clothing, how trine forward baptism is performed, and how the ordinance will be administered. The service may be performed at a time and place where there is adequate water for trine forward immersion, and is appropriate for such an ordinance. This may occur during a morning worship service or at some other time. The following Order of Service is a suggestion. Ministers may use the following suggestions as the basis for their remarks or may use Scriptural materials of their own choosing appropriate for the occasion.)*

*1. Let the service be opened with appropriate song, Scripture reading and prayer.*

*2. The minister may then use the following remarks:*

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18-20). These apostles understood the teaching of their Lord perfectly well. And so, ten days after Jesus had given them this “Great Commission” we read in Acts, chapter 2, that the Holy Spirit came upon them with great power. The multitude, under the preaching of Peter, was convicted in their hearts and they said unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said unto them, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38.) Then we read in verse 41, “They then that received his word were baptized; and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 8:12 and 26-40, Colossians 2:1-15, and Acts 16:25-34 may here be read also.)

From the very beginning of the Church accordingly those who wished to be numbered with the believers were baptized upon confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In baptism our Lord commanded a specific act to be performed. On the part of the believer it is thus an act of obedience, the place of which nothing else can take. It is an outward symbol which signifies in form and substance an inward work of grace wrought by the Holy Spirit in and for the believer.

***As Brethren, we baptize three times, giving equal honor to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as indicated in the Great Commission in Mathew 28: 19-20. We baptize forward from a kneeling position in recognition of the voluntary choice to serve our Lord, and reflective of our Savior's death when he bowed his head on the cross.***

Dearly beloved, called to be the Children of God through Jesus Christ, having presented yourselves for baptism, remember that the privileges conferred by this ordinance are very precious and the duties enjoined are consequently very sacred.

### *3. Public Confession*

Introductory note—The Minister may question those coming for public confession in the following manner:

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner and in need of salvation?
2. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and do you accept Him as your Saving Lord?
3. Do you believe the Bible to be the Word of God and do you accept its teaching as authoritative?
4. Do you now solemnly surrender your life to your Lord and His Service and will you endeavor by God's grace henceforth to live worthily in His sight?

A suitable prayer should be offered following an affirmative response to the above questions.

### *4. The Minister shall then baptize the candidates.*

(Let the water be of suitable depth and let the candidate kneel. Let the candidate bow forward, gently and naturally, under the hand of the administrator. The Minister shall say: "Dear brother, or sister, upon your confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen". (Note—at the naming of each of the Persons of the Trinity the Minister shall gently immerse the candidate

### *5. The service may close with prayer or the benediction or both.*



# Confirmation

*(Note.—Instructions to the Minister—After baptism, either during the same service after the candidates have had opportunity to change clothing, or while still in the baptistery or at a suitable time and preferably at a regular service of the Church, persons being baptized should be confirmed by the laying on of hands. A church may also use this opportunity to receive persons into membership, combining the laying on of hands with the reception of membership service.)*

Let those to be confirmed come forward and after proper instructions let them kneel in prayer. Then, while kneeling, let the Minister lay his or her hands on each in turn and offer a brief prayer of consecration. The following order of service can readily be adapted to any occasion.)

## Order of Service

1. Let the Minister read Acts 8: 14-17; 19:1-6 and Hebrews 6:1, 2.
2. Let the Minister say:

Dearly beloved in the Lord, according to the Word of God just read, those who received baptism at the hands of the Apostles were confirmed by the laying on of hands and prayer. From the Hebrew Epistle we learn that this is one of the First Principles of the teachings of Christ. It is well that we note how the writer there indicated these principles. He insists that believers should press on to perfection. Then in order he names these great doctrines, namely, Repentance, Faith, Baptism, and the Laying on of Hands. None should be omitted. Each should be given its rightful place. The significance of each should be recognized. First principles of Christ dare not be cast aside. The Laying on of Hands is a symbolic rite; it signifies the reception of the Holy Spirit on the part of the believer through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to his commands. It represents a complete surrender on the part of the believer and his consecration to the service of Christ and God, the evidence of which is the presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit with each one of you about to be received into the fellowship of the Church.

3. Let all to be confirmed kneel and let the Minister (or Ministers) lay hands upon the head of each and offer a brief prayer of consecration. (The prayer of consecration should be framed in such a way as to include the symbolism and purpose of the laying on of hands as set forth in 2. The

content of the following scripture portions may also be a guide in the prayer of consecration: 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24, 28; 1 Peter 5: 10; Hebrews 13:20, 21.)

4. Reception into the Church. See the following section.

# *Membership in the Brethren Church*

## **What Is Membership?**

Church membership, as practiced by most denominations, is a logical and, we believe, correct inference from the concept of the church developed by Paul. His use of the “body” imagery (or, more specifically, the body of Christ) as a picture of how the church should function (see Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1-16) likens believers to “members” of a physical body who act in concert for the glory of God and the edifying of the body itself.

Paul makes an assumption in these passages that American Christianity fails at times to appreciate. Commitment to Christ includes commitment to His body, the church. The church here is not to be understood in an invisible or spiritual sense, but in the concrete sense of a local body of believers. Note in this regard 1 Corinthians 12:13 in which Paul indicates that baptism by the Spirit, which is the foundation for our salvation, incorporates us into the body of Christ. As Paul shows in the following context, he understands this body in very concrete terms.

Paul suggests therefore that two commitments are expected of every Christian: commitment to Christ, which is the basis of our salvation, and commitment to a body, which is a key means to our sanctification or growth in the Christian life. Though for purposes of definition, it is important to distinguish these two commitments, they actually should be thought of as a unit. Commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior should always lead us to commitment to His body as represented in a local body of believers. (We distort this Biblical truth when, in our presentation of the gospel, we fail to teach the new believer about the necessity – not for salvation but for Christian growth – of involvement in a local church.) The first commitment looks forward to the second as its practical fulfillment, the second looks back to the first as its presupposition.

## **What Are the Requirements for Church Membership?**

In order to become a member of a local Brethren congregation, a person should fulfill several requirements:

1. The person must have made a commitment of faith to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

2. The prospective member should have been baptized by trine immersion or, in the case of an individual baptized in another denomination, by any form of believers' immersion.
3. There must be the willingness to recognize Christ's Lordship in all areas (failure here will inevitably lead to disruptions in the body). Membership should therefore include a commitment to regular participation in church services, proportional giving of one's resources, and living a life worthy of the Christian calling (fuller descriptions of these commitments can be found in *A Centennial Statement*, pages 7 and 8).
4. Since local bodies as well as denominations have a right to order their lives within the limits of Christian freedom, the prospective member should be willing to accept the procedures and practices agreed upon by these bodies.
5. Because this is commitment to a body and not an institution, there should be a commitment to the other believers in the fellowship with the goal of mutual growth through encouragement, love, prayer, and correction.
6. The person should understand that failure to live up to these commitments will necessitate the loving admonition of the church with the possibility of disfellowshipping if a member fails to heed such admonition.

If these requirements were carried through consistently, there should be only one type of membership, active membership.

### **RECEPTION OF MEMBERS**

(This is a suggested format for receiving new members.)

In the Brethren Church, candidates for church membership present themselves before the gathered body of Christ to make public commitments to their fellow church members (much as we make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ) and to receive commitments in return. These promises are solemn vows made before God and to one another. These are not to be taken lightly, either by the new members or by the present members of the congregation.

Candidates for membership are asked to listen to each question carefully, and if in agreement, to answer, "I do" or "I will"

In presenting yourselves for membership in the congregation:

1. Do you renew your profession of faith in Jesus Christ as your saving Lord and will you live, from this time forward in living and faithful obedience to His Word? (I do.)
2. Do you understand and accept the faith and practice of this church? (I do.)
3. Will you continue in your own spiritual growth and encourage the growth of others through your regular participation in services of worship, study, and fellowship offered by

this church? (I will.)

4. Will you support the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ through this church by giving of your time and money in the way the Bible teaches, and by using the abilities and spiritual gifts God has given you? (I will.)
5. Will you pray regularly for the life and ministry of this church, for its pastor, its leaders, and your fellow members? (I will.)
6. Will you seek to live in harmony with the fellow members of this church: will you support them with your prayers and your encouragement; and will you, in a spirit of love and submission, both give counsel to and receive counsel from your brothers and sisters in Christ? (I will.)

Members of the church are then asked to stand and make these commitments to the new members:

1. Do you, the members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, renew your commitment to Jesus Christ as your saving Lord, and do you renew your commitments to one another as members of this church? If so, answer, “We do.”
2. Do you enter into solemn covenant with these persons being received into church membership, and do you promise them your encouragement, your counsel, and your prayers? If so answer, “We do, by the grace of’ God.”

The pastor then extends “the right hand of fellowship” – a handshake – and welcomes each person into the membership of the church. It is also appropriate to give a word of introduction of each new member to the church as a whole and to invite all church members to welcome each one into membership following completion of the service.

Note: This document was adopted by the General Conference in 1988 as the denominational statement on membership.

## **Membership, Discipline, and Restoration**

One of the elements that caused the Brethren to break from both the established churches and Radical Pietists in Germany was the lack of discipline in these groups. What Franklin Littell has said with regard to the Free Churches is certainly apropos to the Brethren today: “That the Free Churches, whose original complaint against the establishments was precisely that they practiced no true Christian discipline, should have succumbed to such a degree is a scandal twice compounded.” Our concept of membership must include the dimension of discipline; otherwise we are

being neither Biblical nor Brethren. All too often, the development of an inactive membership is a “painless” way of dealing with members who have gone back on their membership vows, while roll revision, without confronting lapsed members before their names are taken off the rolls, amounts to “passive discipline.” Ideally, there should be only one type of membership, active membership. Inactive membership is a contradiction in terms.

Three forms of *membership affirmation* fit very easily into Brethren practice. One is the covenant renewal approach in which all members renew their membership commitments yearly. Those not renewing their vows are dropped from membership, though the pastor or deacon should visit such people prior to removal from the membership roll in order to ascertain the reasons for failure to renew. A second form of *membership affirmation* is the traditional yearly deacon visit. A deacon visits every member of the church once a year to mutually discern and encourage faithfulness to the membership covenant. If more Brethren churches developed such a practice, it would not only lead to a stronger, more committed church body, but it would probably also lead to a renewal among the deacons and deaconesses of many churches. A third approach would be more informal. The pastor along with deacons and deaconesses would once a year review the membership roll and take note of any members who were no longer an active part of the congregation. Either the pastor or a deacon would follow up with the member and ascertain whether they still were committed to their membership vows. If they could not, in good faith, do so, they should be removed from the membership roll. Obviously, this last approach needs to take into account whether the person is a shut-in or is no longer physically able to attend the church.

[NOTE: This third approach is taken from page 11 of the “Pastoral Congregational Manual and should be included here for consistency.]

As intimated above, it should be a set policy in the church that no one is removed from the membership roll without a visit by the pastor and/or deacon. This procedure could have several positive results. It could lead to a restoration of more lapsed members. It could acquaint the pastor with problems in the church that need addressed. It certainly would deepen the spiritual life of the congregation if people knew the pastor and deacons were taking the membership vows of their people seriously.

## **Reconciliation and Discipline of Members**

The New Testament Church, our divine model, is a very relational and communal organization. The communal will of the body, honestly expressed, is its guiding standard. All decisions, arrived at through this Biblical process, must be respected. Any member, for any cause, refusing to peacefully abide by the will of the body, places themselves in a rebellious attitude and in bad standing. The fidelity of a Christian’s faith may come into question if they persist in placing their judgement above the will of the body of the church. No one manifesting such a rebellious spirit should, after an appropriate process of reconciliation and discipline is attempted, continue to be considered a member in good standing of the church. “Study the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one

may edify another,” is a piece of inspired counsel that ought to disarm the few bent on “rule or ruin.” If the body has made a mistake, that mistake can be rectified in time. Let those who are sure such a mistake has been made manifest the spirit of Christ and abide the time until such disagreement may be removed.

Each church will need to develop a process for Biblical reconciliation and possible discipline of its members, and identify those leaders in the church entrusted with the process. It would also be advisable that this same body regularly review the status of members of the church, and develop clear definitions of the responsibilities and expectations of members. Paul’s advice to the Ephesian Elders would warrant such a procedure. (Acts 20:28-31.)

Here is a suggested process for such reconciliation and discipline:

### **Biblical Reconciliation Guidelines**

By Pastor G. Emery Hurd

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Based Upon the Following Scriptures:

On Procedure:

Matt 5:23-24; Matt 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-12; Titus 3:1-10; Luke 6:37-42

On Relationship:

Proverbs 27:5-6, 17; Hebrew 3:13; James 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1-2; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Ephesians 4:15

NOTE: Prayer is a vital part of this process, and intentional prayer should be pursued at every level and before each advance to the next level.

1. Self-Reconciliation – Every believer should individually submit to the authority of God, the Bible, and if committed to a body of believers, to the counsel of that particular body.
2. Private Reconciliation – Any brother or sister, who is offended by another, has the option to simply forgive the wrong. For this to be true all the following conditions must exist:
  - a. I will not talk about this to others
  - b. I will not hold this against the person
  - c. I will not permit this to influence my relationship with this person. (this does NOT include the issue of trust, which is earned. However, if forgiven, the person must be given the opportunity to reasonably re-earn trust)
  - d. If unable to do ALL the above, it should be advanced to the next level

3. Personal Reconciliation – Any brother or sister, who is offended by another, or believes they may have offended another, or believes that a pattern of sinful behavior exists, has a Biblical obligation to privately speak to the offender or victim, for the purpose of forgiveness and reconciliation. This should be a private matter, not involving the church corporately. If an offended individual refuses to do this, then the matter is kept at this level until they choose to act. Frequently the pastor will act on behalf of a congregation if the issue is a widely known public issue that impacts the entire congregation (ex: embezzlement of church funds). In other matters the pastor may act simply because as a brother/sister in Christ they are frequently the first to become aware of an issue that may need discipline. Possible outcomes:
  - a. If the parties are reconciled, and forgiveness and/or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs, and the matter is closed.
  - b. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, it moves to the next level.
  - c. If a party refuses to meet after several honest attempts, it moves to the next level.
  - d. NOTE: No other persons are involved or made aware of the issue other than the parties involved.
4. Supportive Reconciliation – If personal reconciliation fails, the offended party or the victim may request for additional witnesses to the reconciliation process. These should be individuals of good standing in the church community, mature, and respected by the body. These are usually members of the pastoral staff and/or deacons (male or female). Some additional suggestions:
  - a. The witnesses should not be persons directly impacted by the issue being addressed.
  - b. The witnesses should not be obviously biased toward either party
  - c. The witnesses should be made aware of the efforts of the parties to reconcile by the parties themselves.
  - d. Invitations to meet and the results of those meetings should be sent to the parties and the witnesses by certified mail, return receipt requested.
  - e. The purpose of the witnesses is to assist the two parties in finding reconciliation by helping the parties listen to each other, applying scripture accurately, assisting in finding common understanding, and affirming the reconciliation.
  - f. If the parties reconcile and forgiveness and/or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
  - g. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, it moves to the next level.



- h. If a party refuses to meet after several honest attempts, it moves to the next level.
  - i. NOTE: No other persons are involved or made aware of the issue other than the parties involved and the witnesses.
- 5. Corporate Reconciliation – If supportive reconciliation fails, the offended party or the victim may request for a meeting with the designated body within the church responsible for discipline, which is usually the Deacon Board. These should be individuals of good standing in the church community, mature, and respected by the body. Some additional suggestions:
  - a. The members of this body should not be persons directly impacted by the issue being addressed.
  - b. The members of this body should not be obviously biased toward either party.
  - c. The members of this body should be aware of the reconciliation efforts made to this point by the parties and the witnesses involved.
  - d. Invitations to meet and the results of those meetings should be sent to the appropriate body and the parties by certified mail, return receipt requested.
  - e. The purpose of the body is to assist the two parties in finding reconciliation by helping the parties listen to each other, applying scripture accurately, assisting in finding common understanding, and affirming the reconciliation.
  - f. If the parties reconcile and forgiveness and or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
  - g. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, it moves to the next level.
  - h. If a party refuses to meet after several honest attempts, it moves to the next level.
- 6. Congregational Reconciliation – If corporate reconciliation fails, the offended party or the victim may request for a meeting with the congregation. This should be a members only meeting, strictly enforced, with the sole agenda of said meeting to be announced as “a matter of reconciliation” without reference to parties or issues. The congregation meets under the rules of its by-laws, and after hearing from the parties involved, the witnesses, and the designated body within the church responsible for reconciliation, is asked to determine whether the offending party should remain a part of the body (a member). Some additional suggestions:
  - a. ALL members are welcomed to attend.
  - b. Announcement of said meeting should follow the guidelines for announcing any special congregational meeting.
  - c. The members of this body should be aware of the reconciliation efforts made to this

point by the parties, the witnesses and the disciplining body involved.

- d. Invitations to meet and the results of those meetings should be sent to the parties by certified mail, return receipt requested.
  - e. The purpose of the congregation is to provide one last opportunity for reconciliation by helping the parties listen to each other, applying scripture accurately, assisting in finding common understanding, and affirming the reconciliation.
  - f. If the parties reconcile and forgiveness and/or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
  - g. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, a congregational decision is made regarding the offender's status in the body, using whatever guidelines are found in the by-laws. A super-majority (2/3 or ¾) is suggested.
  - h. If the congregational body decides that the offense is not worthy of discipline, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
  - i. If the congregational body decides that the offense is worthy of discipline, the offender is notified of the results of the decision, and they are removed from the membership of the church. Their ability to hold other positions in the church would be determined by the church's by-laws. Other specific restrictions may also be appropriate (for example, a convicted sex offender may not be permitted to work alone with children)
  - j. If a party refuses to meet, the congregation still proceeds with the decision process.
  - k. NOTE: No other persons are involved or made aware of the issue other than the congregants that were in attendance at that closed meeting. The church may choose to designate individuals who will respond to direct queries, provided those queries were initiated by the offended party (for example, if the offender tells a friend something, and that friend asks the church for clarification, the church would be in a position to respond since the confidence was already broken by the offender to that specific party. Extreme sensitivity and tact is required.
7. Post Discipline Actions – Unless the offender is considered a public threat to safety, they are still permitted to attend services, and the congregation is still permitted to maintain regular contact, with the purpose of still bringing the person to a point of reconciliation to the body. If the person at any time communicates a desire to be reconciled, the effort should be welcomed. If the original “victim” is unwilling, this would become a separate issue of discipline. If reconciliation, forgiveness, and/or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the person should be reinstated as a member with the full privileges of a member (the issue of trust is one where the member must be given a reasonable opportunity to regain it. For example, a former Sunday School Teacher may be required to serve as a substitute first before once again teaching).
  8. Public vs. Private Repentance – Repentance is usually a private affair, with the parties pri-

vately receiving said repentance. If the offense is to the entire church, or has reached a level where the entire church has become involved, then public repentance may be preferred. Remember that the relationship between the offender and God and the offender and the offended parties is the priority. Even when public repentance is deemed necessary, it is not necessary for a person to proclaim their actions to the entire congregation, since visitors and others not aware of the situation would be exposed unnecessarily. For example, a person coming forward during a Sunday Service, and the pastor communicating to the body that the person has come forward to repent of an area of sin in their lives is probably sufficient.

9. Process for Members, Believing Friends, and Non-Believing Friends. Members are subject to the entire process outlined above. Friends of the church are subject to all parts except 6) Congregational Reconciliation, because they are not members. Friends after non-repentance at the Corporate level would be prohibited from serving in any office or ministry within the church until repentance occurred. Non- Believing Friends of the church are not subject to church reconciliation because they are still on their journey to be reconciled to Christ.

### **Membership As It Relates to General Conference Statistics**

Each local church has the right to define what constitutes membership in that church, subject to the restrictions provided in the *Manual of Procedure* and based on a biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. However, it is important that local churches use a uniform method of reporting numbers to the General Conference. The standard for reporting an individual as a member of the local church for General Conference purposes shall be as follows:

1. Regular participation in church services
2. Faithful stewardship of one's resources: time and abilities, as well as money
3. Lifestyle worthy of the Christian calling.

The membership roll should be reviewed annually to ascertain the standing of each member. This review process should not be viewed solely in the formal sense of revising the roll for statistical purposes but should even more be seen as an opportunity to draw back into active fellowship all those who have lapsed in their commitments to the Lord and the church. No one should be removed from membership in the church without first being contacted by the pastor and/or the deacons of the church.

Legalistic standards for membership should be avoided. Each church is encouraged to take into account individual circumstances. It is far better to be inclusive when the spirit is right than

exclusive when the standard is not met. To declare an individual out of good standing with the church is, in a sense, to say that that person is out of good standing with the Lord.

Churches should not discard the names of those who are not in good standing and who have not affiliated with another church. Churches should maintain a list of former members, including their address, year baptized, year became a member of the church, and year removed from membership in the church. Further, churches should maintain regular contact with these former members when possible, through the church newsletter, annual visit by the deacons or others charged with spiritual care of the congregation, or any other means for maintaining the relationship. The goal should always be to restore a brother or sister to fellowship with Christ and His church (James 5:19-20).

Local practices ought to reflect as much as possible the definition of membership recognized at the national level.

# *The Communion Service*

Note.—Instructions to the minister: The communion service embraces three distinct ordinances as set forth in the Gospel, namely, first, The Washing of the Saints' Feet; second, the Lord's Supper; and third, The Eucharist or the Communion of the Loaf and the Cup.

The members of the Church should be thoroughly instructed as to the manner of the observance of the whole service and of the several parts. They should as well be carefully instructed as to the meaning of the whole service and of each part. The Minister in charge and the several leaders or helpers, preferably other Elders or Deacons, should exercise the utmost care to make the service impressive and spiritually uplifting.

The particular order in which these elements are practiced has been modified over the years. While it is still traditional to perform the foot washing, followed by the Love Feast, and ending with the Eucharist, Brethren churches have at times done the Love Feast first, allowing for a full meal before the foot washing;. Some churches have also permitted families to wash feet together, in addition to the traditional separate rooms for men and women. Each church should carefully consider their particular practices.

Some Brethren churches choose at times to only perform the Eucharist part of this service. All Brethren churches are to perform threefold communion at least annually.

For the Foot-washing Service, ample basins, towels, and water should be provided. Let every member seek to be quiet and thoughtful of the occasion.

For the Eucharistic Emblems Unleavened Bread and unfermented grape juice are traditionally used.

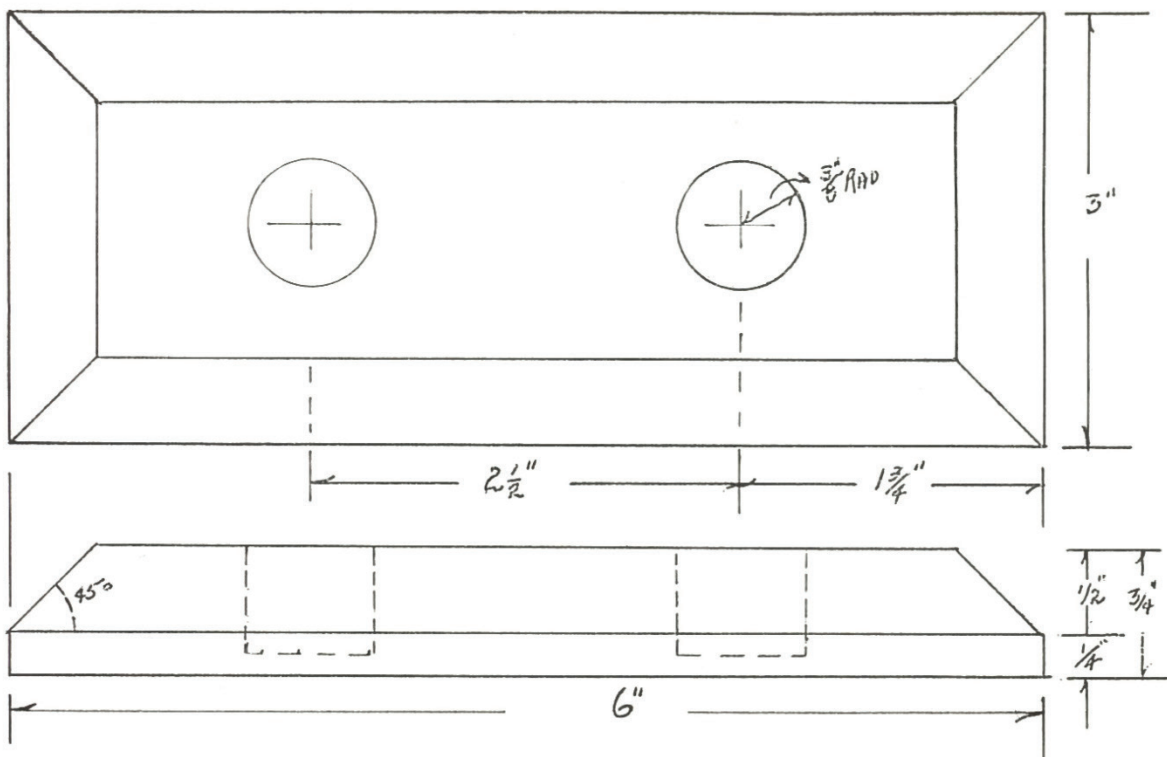
Here are some sample recipes Brethren have historically used for the unleavened bread:

- (1) Flour, 2 qts.; milk, 1½ pts.; unsalted butter size of an egg. Mix to likeness of putty; knead constantly until ready to put in pan. Roll 1/4" thick, mark and bake at 250°. Serves 80-100.
- (2) Flour, 5 cups; ¾ cup unsalted butter; enough cream and milk, or whole milk, to make of to the consistency of pastry. Roll out to ⅛" thickness, mark out in strips 1" wide and bake-at 300° until cream-colored and crisp. (300°) Serves 175-200.
- (3) Flour, 1 quart; 1 pint cream. Mix and knead until no bubbles show when cut. Divide into five portions and roll flat; place on cookie sheet and score for individual trips and pieces. Bake at 300° until cream-colored and crisp. Serves 40-50.
- (4) 1 pint of coffee cream, mix in flour until stiff. Knead thoroughly and roll a little thicker

than pie crust. The more it is kneaded the tougher it will be. Bake at 300° Will serve 80-100 communicants.

- (5) 2 cups flour; 2 tablespoons sugar (optional); 1/2 cup butter flavored Crisco; enough milk for the dough to form a ball. Combine dry ingredients. Cut shortening into dry ingredients. Add enough milk so that dough can be shaped into a ball. Roll dough out to 1/8" thickness on floured board. Cut dough in to 1" strips if breaking around table or 1" x 2" rectangles if breaking across table. Pierce dough in 1" increments with tines of dinner fork. Bake at 400° until golden, about 10 - 12 minutes. Serves 40 - 50

Many congregations prepare the communion elements for the service of communicants by twos. The communion bread is scored deeply into 3/4" or 1" strips. Then the strips are scored deeply crosswise at 2" intervals and each 2" section of the strips perforated in the center with a table fork. When preparing the tables, the bread is broken into strips and each strip into 2" pieces. Just before the hour of communion, those handling the elements place a 2" piece of bread and two individual cups on each wooden server (diagram for construction below) and space the servers on the tables conveniently.



Drawing of Communion Server

Let everything be in readiness for the Service at the appointed time and place before the people assemble. It should be remembered that this is the most Sacred Service of the Church. Every member of the Church should be present.

The minister should seek to prepare the members for the service.

## **The Order of the Service**

This suggested order of service is presented not as a liturgical ritual to be slavishly followed in every detail and word, but rather as an outline which can be varied from service to service by the local pastor.

### **I. The Service of Devotion**

- (1) “Gloria Patri” or the Doxology.
- (2) Prayer of Invocation by the pastor.
- (3) Congregational Hymn
- (4) Scripture Reading (Romans 12; Isaiah 53; Galatians 6; Psalms 42; 51; 139—and other suitable passages)
- (5) Exhortation—The minister may use the following remarks: Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we have met here to observe the ordinances of God’s House. Therefore, let us diligently search our hearts, to examine ourselves as Paul exhorts us to do. Let us come humbly confessing our sins that we may find pardon and peace. Saint James exhorts us to confess our sins one to another and to pray one for another. John declares that “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Let us, therefore, unite our hearts and minds in a period of silent prayer as we prepare ourselves for the further service.
- (6) Period of Directed, Silent Prayer  

(Note—Let the pastor offer the following suggestions throughout this period of silent prayer: Self-examination, Confession of sin, Love for others, The Unsaved, Complete surrender to Holy Spirit, The service itself.)
- (7) The Pastoral Prayer.

### **II. The Service of Cleansing**

- (1) Read John 13:1-17 or 1 - 20
- (2) Give brief meditation on the symbolism, the significance and the need for the Feetwashing Service.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted this act of brotherly service and humility and cleansing in the night in which He was betrayed. He gave us His example concerning which

He said, "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you." He gave us His command in the words of the apostles when He said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet." He pronounced His blessing upon the act when He said, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them."

- (3) Before dismissing the worshipper to enter into the Feetwashing Service, let the minister emphasize the importance of maintaining an atmosphere of reverence throughout the time of feetwashing. Emphasize the importance of using this time as a time of quiet meditation, of self-examination, etc. If possible have quiet music (records, tape, etc.) playing in the feetwashing rooms all during the service.

While some of the worshippers are participating in the feetwashing, let those who are remaining, or who have returned, join in a period of giving of testimonies, singing of hymns, joining in responsive readings, etc. Also let the minister or some other person read appropriate Scripture passages or poems. There might also be special musical numbers during this portion of the service.

- (4) At the conclusion of the Feetwashing Service, when all are seated in the place of assembly, let the minister say: Dearly beloved, we have sought to show our loyalty to the command of our Lord by our obedience. We have again pledged to one another in this act, symbolic of brotherly service, our love and our obligations. May we be faithful to the pledge thus symbolically given to each other that we may share in the blessings which He has promised to those who do this.

### **III. The Service of Love (Charity)**

- (1) Read 1 Corinthians 11: 16-20 or 16-22.
- (2) The minister may use the following remarks: Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the Scriptures teach us that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed ate a supper with His disciples. St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians speaks of it as the Lord's Supper. Peter and Jude both refer to it as the Love Feast. It remains to us, as it was in the early church, a symbolic meal. It is rich in its suggestiveness of brotherly love, of fellowship with one another in Christ, and of the great brotherhood which Jesus Himself founded.
- (3) Then let the minister (or some other leader) give a brief meditation concerning the significance of this service, emphasizing such matters as "Love," "Equality," "Future fellowship of believers in Heaven," etc.
- (4) Returning of Thanks (Minister or Deacon)
- (5) Before eating the minister may use the following remarks: With hearts filled with gratitude to our heavenly Father for His bounties and for the rich provision He has made for our spiritual nurture, let us eat of this supper. May we remember the pledge of brotherhood



which we make as we eat of this common meal. May the memories of the Upper Room and the sacred obligations of brotherhood which were there first exemplified by our Lord and the disciples unite all of us now seated at this table of the Lord with the unbreakable bonds of Christian love and affection. Let us eat of the meal here prepared.

(6) Let each partake of the prepared meal at this time.

#### **IV. The Service of The Loaf and The Cup**

(1) Singing of appropriate hymn (*Break Thou the Bread of Life* or other suitable hymn)

(2) Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

(3) Brief meditational message on Significance of Bread and Cup

(4) The minister may make the following remarks: We are taught in the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had blessed it He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me."

(5) Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Bread (By a deacon or minister)

(6) The minister may make the following remarks: St. Paul in writing concerning the communion bread asks the question: "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?" His question is, in reality, an emphatic declaration, that the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.

(7) Let each communicant then receive a piece of the bread (according to the practice of the local church for the distribution of the bread, either around table, across table, or other arrangement) and let each communicant retain his or her portion of the bread until all have been served, saying, as the bread is broken, "Dear Brother/Sister, this bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ." Let each one then eat of the bread.

(8) The minister may make the following remarks: We are also taught in the Scriptures that in the same manner also, He took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do as oft as you drink it in remembrance of me."

(9) Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Cup by a deacon or minister.

(10) The minister may make the following remarks: St. Paul, in writing about the cup asks a similar question to that asked about the bread. He asks: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" Again, this is an emphatic declaration that the cup which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.

(11) Let each communicant receive the cup, and let each communicant hold his or her cup until all are ready. Then, led by the minister let all say in unison, "Dear Brother/Sister, this cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ."

## V. The Closing Moments

(1) Closing prayer by minister.

(2) A closing Hymn

*(Blest Be the Tie That Binds* makes a very effective closing hymn.)

(3) The Benediction

(Note—Following the Benediction let every worshipper quietly leave the place of communion, in keeping with the teaching of the Scripture— “They sang a hymn and went out into the night.”)

# *The Anointing Service*

## **I. Some Explanatory Remarks**

One of the high privileges of the Christian life, and yet one that is often neglected for various reasons, is the privilege of the anointing service. It is probably less well known than some of the other teachings of the Scriptures, because it is usually administered only to those who specifically request it, and since it is generally conducted within the sickroom or at a bedside, a limited number of individuals witnesses it.

We have all read the Scriptures of the anointing of individuals with oil; we are aware that after such an anointing, hands were frequently laid upon such individuals and prayers were offered on their behalf. Yet, all too often, the spiritual benefits to be found in such an experience escape the average Christian and the majority go through life without any attempt to appropriate its blessings to themselves.

James makes quite a convincing argument that the service shall be at the request of an individual who seeks its blessings for himself or herself (5:14-16). He continues to speak of what may be anticipated in this same passage if the one being anointed meets God's requirements.

In Old Testament days the anointing ceremony was for the purpose of a person's being set apart for a special use. Such was the case when Aaron was anointed and set apart or consecrated to the high priesthood (Exodus 29:7; 40:1-16). When Saul was called by God for special duties, it was Samuel, God's prophet, who anointed him with oil (1 Samuel 10:1-10). David experienced much the same call, when again Samuel, directed by God, anointed him to be king (1 Samuel 16: 12, 13). In both of these calls the Scriptures speak of the fact that the Spirit of God moved upon them in a mighty fashion, following the anointing.

The New Testament, likewise, makes frequent reference to anointing with oil for the purpose of "setting apart" also, but here we find Jesus expanding its use to include the blessing of healing, the increasing of one's faith and the forgiveness of sin. He not only laid His hands upon those who were afflicted, but encouraged the disciples to do the same, and to anoint with oil, praying for the recovery of health of those afflicted. (See Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:13-15; 6:7-13; Acts 5: 12-16 and

others.) The Epistles continue to refer to the same emphasis, and the writings of James (5: 13-16) especially, leave no doubt of the importance of this teaching in the minds of Jesus' followers.

Since the power of God's Spirit has not lessened from that day to this, and since our Lord urged His disciples to go forth to pray for the healing of those who were afflicted during the time of His ministry upon the earth, we have every reason to believe that such a ministry of consecration and healing should be continued in our day.

## **II. Preparing the One to be Anointed**

There need be no prescribed pattern or established rule that must be observed to fulfill this service. It is, however, of paramount importance that the person calling for the anointing be fully instructed as to the meaning and purpose, as well as the possibilities of this privilege. If we anticipate that God will bring specific blessing through the anointing service, we must be prepared to meet any requirements or obligations that He would impose upon us.

James speaks of several areas of concern in verses 15 and 16:

1. He speaks of the necessity of confessing our faults.
2. He implies reconsecration or renewal of life through a prayer of faith. As previously suggested, the anointing is a "setting apart" or a consecration of life to God.
3. He speaks, further, of the assurance of the forgiveness of sin.
4. He says: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick," and this may well mean physical healing. However, even more important might be the promise of salvation to an individual seeking God's peace and comfort.
5. The same passage says: "The Lord shall raise him up," and again this may well mean being raised from a bed of affliction. However, once again, of even more assurance and blessing is the promise of the resurrection.

All of these promises are given to us on the basis of our faith and upon our willingness to allow God's will to be uppermost in our minds and lives. This is the reason for giving opportunity for confession, for a witness of faith, and for a commitment of life.

## **III. Conducting the Service**

Assuming that the necessary preparations have been completed, the one officiating might say something like this: "Upon your request for the service of anointing, and in obedience to the teaching of God's Word, and upon your willingness to accept the Bible as the basis of authority in your

life, I anoint\* you with oil in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, for the increase of your faith, for the healing of your body and for the forgiveness of your sins.”

\*Sweet oil may be obtained from most pharmacies for this purpose, and he will be happy to add a drop or two of some fragrance into the oil, if desired. Many Christian Bookstores have oil specifically prepared for anointing. The oil is simply applied by touching the tip of the finger to the oil. Let the one assisting (elder or deacon) now pour a few drops of oil on the left hand of the officiating minister and let the minister apply the oil to the upper forehead of the sick, at the naming of each person of the Holy Trinity.

Following the anointing, the one conducting the service, along with the person assisting, will each place a hand upon the head of the one being anointed, and each will offer a prayer on his or her behalf — remembering especially the specific reasons given for the anointing, as quoted above.

In order to permit a time for meditation and prayer, it is helpful if those conducting the service (as well as those who have witnessed it) remove themselves from the room shortly after the service is ended.

# *Call, Commissioning, Licensing, and Ordination Procedures of Pastors and Elders*

In the original handbook, the process for call, licensing, and ordination was included. These items have been significantly expanded, and are now found in three separate documents.

*The Brethren Church Manual of Ordination Procedures* includes all procedures and forms for issuing a call to ministry, the various levels of pastoral ministry available in the Brethren Church, the status of individuals seeking to serve in Brethren Churches from other denominations, and several documents which define the current Brethren positions regarding ordination-

The Reading Program for Ordination contains all the forms, required and suggested readings for those pursuing ordination, but will not be obtaining a formal degree from a seminary, university, or Bible College.

*The Brethren Church Manual of Pastoral and Congregational Procedures* includes basic definitions of the levels of pastoral calling, defines the responsibilities and rights of the various levels of pastoral ministry, defines the proper ethics and relationship between pastors and congregations, and outlines the process involved in calling and disciplining elders within the church. Additional documents in this manual explain the concept of membership in the church, and the process of discipline of church members

Copies of these documents should be maintained by all congregations (moderators and Deacons) and by all pastors. They are available in print or electronic format from your Regional Resource Coordinator, the Brethren Church National Office, or at [www.BrethrenChurch.org](http://www.BrethrenChurch.org).

# Ordination Service of an Elder

(Note. —It is always necessary to have all the requirements of the local church, the Region, and the National Ordination Council met before announcement of an ordination service is made. An ordination requires at least two elders to officiate. A member of the Regional Leadership Team, having the oversight of that church, should be invited to be present. It is of special importance that all matters be clearly understood in relation to such areas as (1) the call, qualifications, authority and duties of an elder in the Brethren Church; (2) the procedures of calling, examining and ordaining; and (3) all of the responsibilities which belong to the ordaining church and the ordaining elder(s). A careful study must be made of the documents entitled *The Brethren Church Manual of Commissioning, Licensing and Ordination Procedures* and *A Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church*.)

## Order of Ordination Service

1. There shall be suitable services, preferably a complete service of public worship, including an appropriate sermon.
2. After the sermon let one of the officiating ministers state the purpose of the special service. Let the record of the action of the church in calling the candidate to the Christian Ministry, and of the request to the Regional Leadership Team for his examination be read. Then have read the communication from the Regional Leadership Team which authorizes the ordination.
3. Let one or more of the following passages of Scripture be read: Matt. 9:36-38; John 10:1-16; 20:19-24; Eph. 4:7-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-6; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; or other appropriate passages.
4. One of the ministers shall say to the congregation:

The (name of church) Brethren Church of (location) and of the (Region Name) Region of Brethren Churches, having confidence in the Christian conviction and experience, the sincerity of purpose, the integrity of character, and the gifts of mind and spirit of candidate's name has, according to the custom and polity of the Brethren Church, called this candidate to the Christian Ministry.

(At this point the candidate shall come and stand at a designated place before the congregation, ready to take his or her vows of consecration and ordination. Also at this time all ordained ministers

who may be in the audience may be invited to stand and remain standing until the final statement of authority has been made.)

The minister shall continue: And now that this congregation which is present may also understand your mind and will in these things. and in order that your pledge may all the more move you to do your duty, you shall answer plainly to all these questions which we, in the name of God, and of this church, require of you.

Let Titus 1: 1-9 be read at this point.

*Minister:* Do you reaffirm your faith in and commitment to the whole gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord?

*Candidate:* I do.

*Minister:* Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept the New Testament as the all-sufficient rule in all matters of faith and practice in the Church and in daily life?

*Candidate:* I do so believe.

*Minister:* Have you been induced to enter the office of the Christian Ministry, as far as you know your own heart, only from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the Gospel of his Son?

*Candidate:* I have.

*Minister:* Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever hardship or opposition may come to you on that account?

*Candidate:* I do so promise.

*Minister:* Do you accept and adopt the order and practice of the Brethren Church. particularly her acceptance of the fundamental and cardinal principles of the New Testament, her practices of the Ordinances, and her stress upon the practice of the Christian virtues and graces of life—each and all set forth in the New Testament?

*Candidate:* I do so accept and adopt.

*Minister:* Do you truly believe that you are called according to the will of God to the office of an Elder in the Brethren Church, and do you willingly accept the obligations of this office, being fully determined by the grace of God to make full proof of your ministry as the Lord commanded?

*Candidate:* I do truly believe and accept.

(If the candidate is married, the candidate's spouse may now come and stand by them, and one of the ministers shall require of the spouse these pledges:)

*Minister:* Do you fully agree to your spouse's entrance into the Christian Ministry!



*Spouse:* I do.

*Minister:* Do you now also reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ. and do you recognize the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God?

*Spouse:* I do so believe.

*Minister:* Will you sustain your beloved companion in the Christian Ministry, uniting with him in a ministry of prayer and devotion, encouraging him by your love and prayers, sharing with him/her in this ministry now entrusted to him/her, so far as God gives you grace and strength?

*Spouse:* God being my helper, I will.

5. After the foregoing vows have satisfactorily been declared, let the minister say: Dear brother/sister, in response to the call of God, expressed through the Church, you have willingly given yourself to the work of the Ministry, you have come now to the formal setting apart of yourself to this Holy work. May a deep sense of responsibility possess your whole being as you give your life to God. As he gives it back to you, consecrated to do his will, may there never come a moment when you will not be ready to witness of him. May the joy of service be yours and may the compensations of duty well done be your portion.
6. Let the candidate and his or her spouse (if the candidate is married) now kneel and let one of the ministers pray:

“Holy and righteous Father, accept the offering of the life of this, thy servant, our fellow elder. Consecrate this elder to thy service in accord with thy will. Make this elder’s Ministry fruitful in the salvation of souls, in the building up and edifying of the Church and in the care of those souls committed to his(her) charge. Grant that the Holy Spirit may be his(her) teacher, guide, and constant companion. May he(she) make full proof of his(her) ministry as a faithful steward of his(her) entrustment. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

One of the officiating ministers shall pray for the spouse in this manner: Holy Father, as you brought man and woman together at the beginning, so you also brought (candidate’s name) and (spouse’s name) together. Bless (spouse’s name) and give (him)her the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord and the Holy Spirit’s guidance as (he)she works to sustain (his)her spouse and share in the ministry now entrusted to (candidate’s name), in the name of our Lord. Amen.

7. Then let the officiating ministers lay hands upon the candidate while she or he is still kneeling. Let one of them say: The Lord our God empower you through the person of the Holy Spirit for the office and work of the ministry now committed unto you by the authority of the Church through the laying on of our hands. And now by the authority vested in us as Elders of the Church of the Living God we solemnly and in fear and in reverence set you apart to the office of and Elder in the Brethren Church, and this we do in the name of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

8. Then let the candidate stand and let one of the ministers take the candidate by the right hand and say: Brother(Sister) (candidate's name), take authority in the Brethren Church to perform the duties and offices of an Elder, to preach the Word of God, and to administer the Holy Sacraments and Ordinances in the Brethren Church, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
9. The services may be concluded with song and the benediction. (It has become customary in the Brethren Church for the newly ordained Elder to pronounce the benediction.)

# *Service for Licensing or Commissioning a Minister*

## **Order of Service for Licensing**

Note: “Commissioning” can be substituted for “Licensing”

1. There shall be suitable services, preferably a complete service of public worship, including an appropriate sermon.
2. After the sermon let one of the officiating ministers state the purpose of the special service. Let the record of the action of the church in calling the candidate to the Christian Ministry, and of the request to the Regional Leadership Team for his or her examination be read. Then have read the communication from the Regional Leadership Team which authorizes the licensing or commissioning.
3. Let one or more of the following passages of Scripture be read: Matt. 9:36-38; John 10:1-16; 20:19-24; Eph. 4:7-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-6; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; or other appropriate passages.
4. One of the officiating ministers shall say: The (name of church) Church of (church location), realizing the need of dedicated and consecrated persons to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and recognizing her stewardship for her Lord, has called (name of candidate) to the office of the Christian Ministry. Having confidence in the candidate’s sincerity of purpose, Christian character, and capabilities, and having the approval of the Regional Leadership Team, it has voted that (candidate’s name) be licensed to preach the Gospel.

(At this point the candidate shall come and stand at a designated place before the congregation.)

One of the ministers shall continue: Do you reaffirm your faith in and commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord?

*Candidate:* I do.

*Minister:* Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept the New Testament as the sufficient rule in all matters of faith and practice in the Church and in daily life?

*Candidate:* I do so believe.

*Minister:* Do you truly believe that you are called to preach the Gospel in the Brethren Church?

*Candidate:* I do truly believe.

*Minister:* Do you accept and adopt the order and practice of the Brethren Church, particularly her acceptance of the fundamental and cardinal principles of the New Testament, her practices of the Ordinances, and her stress upon the practice of the Christian virtues and graces of life?

*Candidate:* I do so accept and adopt.

*Minister:* Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, and to receive with love and thankfulness the advice and guidance of those who are to guide you during your time of licensure?

*Candidate:* I do so promise.

5. Let the candidate now kneel for prayer:

Let one of the officiating ministers offer a simple prayer of rededication and consecration, without any references to ministerial authority.

6. Let the candidate now stand, and one of the ministers take him or her by the right hand and say: Because of your confession of faith, and because of the promises of consecration you have made, I by the virtue of authority vested in me by this church and the Regional Leadership Team, and in the name of the Brethren Church acting for the Lord Jesus Christ, give you authority to preach the Gospel. May God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit bless and inspire you and make your ministry fruitful.

7. The service may be closed in the usual manner.

# *Election and Ordination of Deacons and Deaconesses*

Many aspects of the office of deacon have been in a state of flux since the latter 1900s. This includes the matter of the election of deacons and deaconesses. The following recommendations for the selection of men and women to this office are meant to provide some flexibility for the decision process but also some specific reminders about how to conduct this selection “decently and in order.” Be aware that specific requirements and responsibilities for Deacons and Deaconesses can be found in *A Manual of Procedure of the Brethren Church* and *The Brethren Church Manual for Pastoral and Congregational Procedures*.

## **General Guidelines**

No matter what selection process is used, there are several important principles and guidelines to keep in mind.

- Though the language of “deacon” and “deaconess” continues to be used in many Brethren churches and is retained in this document and in *A Manual of Procedure of the Brethren Church*, the more recent practice of the Brethren Church understands the term “deacon” not to be gender specific. In other words, it is proper to elect both men and women to the office of deacon.
- Traditionally, a deacon couple, husband and wife, were selected as deacons. However, more recent Brethren practice has involved election of either a husband or a wife, not the couple, or of a single person.
- There is a recent trend in the Brethren Church to move away from ordaining men and women for life to setting them apart or commissioning them for a specific term of office, for example, four years. After this period, they would have the choice of seeking another term of office or not.
- Deacons should not be relegated to simply helping with the ordinances, as has happened all too often, but should be engaged in various spiritual roles in the congregation, such as visiting the sick and shut-ins, aiding with anointing, assisting in cases of discipline, and, if trained, providing spiritual counsel and encouragement.

- The election of deacons, like the election of pastors, should be surrounded with prayer, specifically asking the Lord for discernment and wisdom in the process.
- The selection of deacons should involve two parts: (1) the request by the pastor, Deacon Board or the governing board (the Official or Administrative Board) for additional deacons, including a determination of how many new deacons are needed, and (2) the election.
- Before an election of deacons occurs, the pastor should have focused teaching or preaching on the qualifications and responsibilities of deacons.

## **Options for the Election of Deacons**

Three options for the selection of new deacons are offered below. There is no necessarily preferred form of election; each of these election processes can be found in current Brethren usage.

### **1. A traditional Brethren method of election of deacons with ordination**

#### *a. The calling of candidates for the Deaconship*

The voting process for discerning candidates for deaconship occurs by secret ballot. All members present receive a ballot on which they write the names of as many husband and wife couples, or single men or women candidates, as have been deemed needed (if eight new deacons are desired, eight names should be written on the ballot). The balloting continues until the required number have received a majority vote of those present; or if the desired number have not received a majority vote after five ballots, the ten having the highest count shall be named and the voting continued. Then the numbers on the slate shall be reduced by eliminating the lowest in the tally, and the highest, if polling a majority, until the required number is attained.

The Deacon Board serves as tellers for the voting. They announce no names or tallies during the five secret ballots unless an election is declared, then only the names. At no time is the tally of any vote to be revealed. The ballots are to be destroyed and the tallies remain a secret.

When those called are declared by the tellers, the congregation shall set the date for the formal election. After a call to the deaconship, as outlined above, the Board of Deacons should counsel with the candidates relative to the office of deacon and their willingness to serve.

#### *b. The formal election*

Election after the call to the deaconship is by secret ballot with a two-thirds affirmative vote required. At this stage, only as many names should appear on the ballot as have previously

been agreed are needed. The vote then becomes an up or down vote for each candidate with a two-thirds vote necessary for election.

*c. The ordination service*

After the election of new deacons, the pastor and Board of Deacons should make arrangements for the ordination service. It is considered good order and advisable to invite a member of the Regional Leadership Team or a neighboring pastor to assist in the ordination.

## **2. A modified form of election with ordination**

*a. The calling of candidates for the Deaconship*

The pastor(s) and Board of Deacons (or possibly the Administrative Board) should enter into a season of prayer and discernment to determine if and how many new deacons are needed. The congregation should be involved in the calling process by sharing with the appropriate board the names of people whom they feel have the qualifications to serve as deacons (the pastor may want to do some teaching on the biblical guidelines for deacons). Based on the list of potential candidates generated by the congregation, the pastor and the appropriate board, after discerning the spiritual qualifications of those listed, should nominate the specific number of people needed as new deacons. The Board of Deacons should then counsel with the candidates concerning the responsibilities of deacons and their willingness to serve. If a potential candidate does not wish to serve in this role, an additional candidate from the list generated by the congregation may be selected and interviewed.

*b. The formal election*

Election after the call to the deaconship is by secret ballot with a two-thirds affirmative vote required. The vote is an up or down vote for each candidate.

*c. The ordination service*

After the election of new deacons, the pastor and Board of Deacons should make arrangements for the ordination service. It is considered good order and advisable to invite a member of the Regional Leadership Team or a neighboring pastor to assist in the ordination.

**NOTE:** This option would especially be appropriate in larger congregations when members are less acquainted with one another. Some congregations have also used this method to avoid any sense of undue favoritism in the selection process.

### **3. Election to a term of office**

#### *a. Guidelines for selecting deacons for a term of office*

An increasing number of Brethren congregations are choosing to elect deacons to a term of office. This change from the traditional form of ordination for life is due to such factors as deacons wanting to retire or take a break from their deacon responsibilities, churches finding it difficult to recruit people for a lifetime commitment, and the desire to have more turnover of people in the deaconship.

Churches that desire to make this change should consider such issues as the length of the term of office, how to make the transition from people ordained to a lifetime office to people elected to a term of office, and how to appropriately install deacons elected for a term of office. Below are some thoughts.

Churches should consider allowing for terms of office from three to five years in length. This allows for a degree of continuity from year to year. It would be wise, however, to limit the number of terms a deacon could consecutively serve to two in order to allow other qualified people to enter the deaconship and to avoid burnout in those serving as deacons.

If a congregation decides to move from ordaining deacons for life to commissioning them to a term of office, those deacons who have been ordained for life should be given the option to retire from their office or to move to an agreed-upon term of office. They should not be forced to resign.

Deacons elected to a term of office should be installed in a less formal way than the traditional ordination service. Yet, they should be appropriately recognized as valued officers within the life of the church. As recommended below, they should be recognized by the congregation as would any other newly elected officer in the congregation.

#### *b. The selection of candidates for the deaconship*

The pastor(s) and Board of Deacons (or possibly the Administrative Board) should enter into a season of prayer and discernment to determine if and how many new deacons are needed. The congregation should be involved in the nomination process by sharing with the appropriate board the names of people whom they feel have the qualifications to serve as deacons (the pastor may want to do some teaching on the biblical guidelines for deacons). Based on the list of potential candidates generated by the congregation, the pastor and the appropriate board, after discerning the spiritual qualifications of those listed, should nominate the specific number of people needed as new deacons. The Board of Deacons should then counsel with the candidates concerning the responsibilities of deacons and their willingness to serve. If a potential candidate does not wish to serve in this role, an additional candidate from the list generated by the congregation may be selected and interviewed.



*c. The formal election*

Election after the nomination to the deaconship is by secret ballot with a two-thirds affirmative vote required. The vote is an up or down vote for each candidate. Deacons who are newly elected to a term of office should be recognized by the congregation in the same way any other newly elected officer in the congregation is set apart for service.

# *Ordination Service of Deacons*

(Note. — Instructions to the pastor —The following service may be used when deacons are ordained for life. It may also be adapted in the case of deacons elected to a term of office. Deacons should be elected in accordance with the local congregation's constitution and by-laws and the recommendations found in this handbook. The following order of worship is a suggested model for an ordination service and may be readily adapted to the occasion. Deacons may be ordained by the pastor, if he or she is an ordained elder in the Brethren Church. The pastor should be assisted by another elder or preferably by a member of the Regional Leadership Team, who should be invited to be present.)

## **The Service of Ordination**

1. There should be suitable devotional services, preferably a complete service of public worship, including an appropriate sermon.
2. Let one of the ministers state the purpose of this service. Then let the record of the action of the Church authorizing the Ordination of the candidate (or candidates) be read.
3. I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6 may be read. (If a sister is to be ordained as a deacon, Romans 16:1, 2, 12-16 may be read.)
4. Let those to be ordained stand before the audience and let each answer the following questions:
  - a. Do you believe that the New Testament is a sufficient Rule of faith and practice in the Church? (Answer, I do.)
  - b. Do you willingly accept the office of a deacon to which the Church has called you, and will you by the grace of God faithfully discharge the duties of this office?
  - c. Will you promise to help the pastor of this Church to promote the peace and prosperity of the Church by your godly life and by the personal efforts put forth in the discharge of your duties as a deacon?
5. After these questions have been satisfactorily answered by each one to be ordained the minister may say: Dear brother (or brothers or sisters), the Church has called you to a most important position within her field of endeavor. In response to this call you have presented yourself here willingly to be set apart to this Holy office. You have surrendered your life

to God only to have it given back to you for his service while you live. May you serve him with singleness of heart and purpose. May he (she) make full proof of his (her) service as a faithful steward of his (her) entrustment. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

6. Let the candidate (or candidates) now kneel and let a prayer of consecration be offered: Holy Father, accept the life offered to you by this your servant now. Take this life and consecrate it to your service and to the doing of your will. May his (or her) life be wholly devoted to you to be used to your glory and the up building of the Church. May the Holy Spirit abide with and dwell in the heart of this, your servant. When his (or her) tasks here are accomplished, receive him (or her) into eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
7. While the candidate (or candidates) remain kneeling, let the ministers place their hands upon the head of each and let one of the ministers say: And now by the authority vested in us as the Elders of the Church, we solemnly set you apart to the holy office of deacon in the Church, and this we do in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.
8. Then let the candidates stand and let one of the ministers take him (or her) by the right hand and say—Brother (or sister) Take authority in the Church as a deacon to discharge all the duties laid upon you by the New Testament and usage of this Church. May you serve well in the office of a deacon that the promise of the Word may be yours in full measure.
9. The service may close with a suitable song and the benediction.

# *Public Dedication of Children Forms 1 and 2*

## **(Form 1)**

(Note.—Many godly and God-fearing parents believe children to be God’s best and holiest gift to them. Parenthood is a supreme blessing. To this end God instituted marriage and made it inviolate. It is fitting that parents should dedicate their children to God and pledge themselves to rear them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The following order of service may readily be adapted to any occasion of consecration of children. The service may be at any hour of worship.)

### **Order of Service**

1. Let the minister say: In the Old Testament we read of Hannah bringing Samuel to the House of the Lord and dedicating him to his service there. In the Gospels we read of mothers bringing their little children to Jesus for his blessing.
2. Let those who wish to present their children now bring them forward. Let the minister announce the name of each child and the names of both parents. Then the minister may say:
3. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children: to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them (Psalm 103: 17, 18). For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord God shall call (Acts 2:39). And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child he shall not enter therein”. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:13-16).
4. Then shall the minister ask the parents of each child: Dearly beloved, do you in presenting this child in dedication renew your own solemn pledge to your Lord to live and serve him to the best of your ability, and do you promise in presenting this child to teach him/her

both by word of mouth and the holy walk of your daily life in the way of the Lord? Will you seek to bring this child, when he/she grows to suitable age, to an acceptance of Christ as its Saving Lord and to seek membership in the Church by baptism and obedience to the will of God? (Answer, We do.)

5. Then let the minister lay his right hand upon the head of the child and say as he does so: I dedicate this child to the Lord, to be nurtured and cared for by his (or her) parents in the fear of God, and to be by them instructed in all the ways of the Lord that at the proper age he (or she) may willingly choose Christ as Savior. And this I do in the name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.
6. Then the minister may offer a suitable prayer or use this benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

## **(Form 2)**

(Note.—Many godly and God-fearing parents believe children to be God's best and holiest gift to them. Parenthood is a supreme blessing. To this end God instituted marriage and made it inviolate. It is fitting that parents should dedicate their children to God and pledge themselves to rear them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The following order of service may readily be adapted to any occasion of consecration of children. The service may be at any hour of worship.)

### **Order of Service**

- I. Let the minister say: In the Old Testament we read of Hannah bringing Samuel to the House of the Lord and dedicating him to his service there. In the Gospels we read of mothers bringing their little children to Jesus for his blessing.
2. Let those who wish to present their children now bring them forward. Let the minister announce the name of each child and the names of both parents. Then the minister may say:
3. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children: to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them (Psalm 103:17, 18). For the promise is to you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord God shall call (Acts 2:39). And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:13-16). Dearly beloved, do you together as parents, and

individually as father and mother, present (child's name) to the Lord in dedication to the Lord? And do you fully accept the responsibility as Christian parents to surround him (or her) with an atmosphere of faithfulness to Christ through word and example? And do you solemnly promise before God and these witnesses that you will, to the best of your ability, bring up this little one in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, making use to that end of all the helps which God has given to His children in family devotions, in Church and in Sunday school. And will you seek to bring this child, when he (or she) shall have come to suitable age, to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior and to seek membership in His Church?

4. To you the parents, the congregation presents this budding flower as a symbol of (child's name) budding personality. We pledge our interest and assistance in the maturing and unfolding to full blossom in the life of the church.
5. To you (using the name of the child), I give this small white flower (sweet pea) as a token of your innocence and purity of soul in the sight of God. My earnest prayer, as I look into the pristine innocence of your face, is that when you lose your innocence and your eyes of understanding are opened, you will see Jesus, whom to see is life and life eternal.
6. Prayer. (This or other suitable brief petition) Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for this service of Dedication, and pray Your blessing upon these parents and upon this child (these children). May this father and mother (these parents), inspired and led by Your loving Spirit, be enabled to train and teach this little one (these little ones) that he (she, or they) shall grow as Jesus did—"in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

(The following items can be placed in either form 1 or 2 if a family desires Godparents, or if a congregational commitment is desired as part of the ceremony –ed.)

4b. Godparents (optional)

Do you who stand with this family promise to renew your pledge to the Lord to live and serve Him to the best of your ability, and to support these parents with your time, your prayers, and your loving care, assisting them in teaching this child in the way of the Lord? (Answer, we do).

4c. Congregation stands:

Do you as the members and friends of this congregation pledge to this family your prayers and loving support, assisting to raise this child to knowledge and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? (Answer, we do with the help of God).

# *Installation Service for Church School Workers and Officers – Forms 1 and 2*

## **Form 1**

(Note. —This suggested service requires that the responses for both the workers and congregation be printed and in their hands.)

### *Pastor's Statement of Call to Officers and Teachers.*

Brethren, the various and varied activities of the church call for the use of the equally varied gifts of its members. Paul has stated the matter in his declaration that “there are diversities of gifts but one Spirit and differences of administration but one Lord, and diversities of operation, but one and the same God that works all in all.” You have been called, because of your gifts for teaching, into the ministry of this congregation. “You are my witnesses,” says the Lord, “and my servants whom I have chosen that you may know and believe me.” And again the Word declares “And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart.” And once more we find God giving instructions to His people that the words which convey His wish and will for His people should be taught to their children. It is because of our desire that these words shall also be taught to our children that we have called you into this service. If you are willing to accept the call to this service, will you repeat the following response with me.

### *Workers' Response:*

“Your commandments we will write upon the tablets of our hearts, O Lord,” and “we will teach them diligently unto our children.”

### *Pastoral Charge to Members-at-large: (Standing)*

“These workers in our Sunday School have pledged themselves to be witnesses for God, and to keep His commandments. But God speaks not only to teachers but to parents as well when he says, ‘Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit

at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up' (Deut. 6:7) The work of the Sunday School flourishes best with the cooperative effort of the home. As parents and members-at-large of the church, do you promise to support the efforts of these teachers and leaders of our Sunday School to the glory of God?"

*Congregational Response:*

We have heard the pledge given by our teachers and workers, and we promise to give full cooperation on our part in the efforts of these teachers to impart to our children the eternal principles of right and truth and righteousness, as contained in God's Word, which is our textbook and guide.

*Pastoral Charge to Workers:*

"To you who have answered the call to this special service for our Lord, we charge you now to an awareness of the disciplines of your office asking that you would now pledge yourself to them as a means of aiding you in loyal service."

*Workers' Covenant: (Repeated in unison by officers and teachers)*

Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, we humbly promise him, and this church, that we will be faithful to the extent of our abilities, to all the duties and responsibilities of teachers and workers in a Church School. We pledge ourselves to these objectives: Regularity in attendance, diligence in lesson preparation, loyalty to the objectives and plans and rules of the school, consistency in our own personal living, and faithfulness to our own Church. We will seek earnestly and honestly the development of Christian character in those whose soul instruction is entrusted to our care.

*Congregational Blessing: (Repeated in unison by the people)*

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace."

*Unison Prayer: (Repeated by workers and congregation)*

Almighty God, as Your workers, we come to You in humility, and conscious of our lack of wisdom. We ask that You will grant us Your wisdom so that the service we have pledged You may result in Your exaltation, and that we might live in such a manner that Your love is made manifest to those around us whom You call us to serve. Grant that we may be workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.



*Pastoral Benediction:*

May the blessing of God rest upon you in the discharge of the responsibilities you have assumed, make you faithful to all the duties of your respective departments; and may the church be prospered by your service and God be honored in your fidelity. May the peace of God which passes understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord, “till He comes.” Amen.

**Form 2**

In the Church of Jesus Christ there are many and varied offices. In like manner, God has given many and varied gifts to His followers. As the Apostle Paul writes: “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.” (1 Cor 12:4-6) You have been called to serve your Lord and His Church, using the particular talents he has given to you. Remember that although our tasks differ, we are all “laborers together with God.”

Do you each promise to do your utmost to fulfill the duties of the office to which you have been called seeking strength and direction at the throne of grace?

Will you seek to provide wise leadership and support the Church and her programs by your regular attendance, your loyalty to the objectives and plans of this church, and by consistency in your own Christian life and witness?

Do you, the members of (Name of Church) promise to support these officers with your prayers and your faithfulness in Christian witness and service?

*Prayer:*

I now charge each of you with the responsibilities of your office in the church. Take the authority your office provides; use it humbly and prayerfully in God’s service.

May God bless us as together we go forth to serve. Amen.

# *Suggested Aids for Dedication Services of Buildings, Etc.*

*Scripture passage: 1 Corinthians 3:9-11*

“For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

## **THE LITANY OF DEDICATION, FORM 1 (for various items):**

*MINISTER:* Dearly beloved, for as much as it has pleased God to put into the heart of His servants to (activity, such as “construct this building”), let us now fulfill the Godly purpose for which we are here assembled, the dedication of (item being dedicated) to the honor of God’s most holy name.

*CONGREGATION:* We humble ourselves in His presence for this act of dedication. To the glory of God our Father, whose we are and whom we serve; to the advancement of the knowledge of Christ our Lord, who loved the church and gave himself for her; to the Holy Spirit that He may come into our lives to empower us and to guide us; and to the good of our neighbors, whom we seek to love as we love ourselves, we come now to dedicate.

*MINISTER:* We thank You for faithful forefathers who possessed a hunger for the nourishment of the Word and for the blessing of inheriting a living faith which feeds and grows on Scriptural inquiry.

*CONGREGATION:* We thank You for the faithful labors of all who have planned and worked so that (item being dedicated) can be used for the faithful stewardship of talents and possessions from which so much has been given.

*MINISTER:*(Additional response appropriate to that being dedicated.)

*CONGREGATION:* We dedicate this (item being dedicated)

*MINISTER:*(Additional response appropriate to that being dedicated.)

*CONGREGATION:* We dedicate this (item being dedicated)

*MINISTER:* Our Father, we ask Your help to make ~~this~~ (use of item dedicated)

*CONGREGATION:* We dedicate this (item being dedicated)

*MINISTER:* That we all may fulfill our call from God in Jesus Christ to be His witnesses.

*CONGREGATION:* We now commit ourselves to the unfinished task of ministering God's truth for the salvation of the lost and for the increasing of faith in the lives of the saints.

*MINISTER AND CONGREGATION:* Looking with hope to the time when the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, we dedicate this Amen.

### ***THE LITANY OF DEDICATION FORM 2 (FOR EDUCATIONAL BUILDING):***

*LEADER:* Having been prospered by the hand of God, and having been led by the Spirit to the initiation and completion of this task.

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate ourselves to be good stewards of this added entrustment.

*LEADER:* Believing that God our Father is the author of every good and perfect gift.

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate ourselves to use these facilities for the worship of God and to the obedience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*LEADER:* Realizing the obligation to bring up our children in the nurture of the Lord.

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate ourselves to use these facilities for the purposes of Christian Education.

*LEADER:* In accordance with the commandment of Christ to love our neighbor as ourselves.

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate ourselves to use these facilities for discerning the will of God, admonishing the Saints and for Christian fellowship.

*LEADER:* Knowing that it is only through a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ that anyone can be saved.

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate ourselves and these facilities to make Christ known to the unsaved.

*LEADER:* In obedience to the command and commission of Christ to make disciples of all people.

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate ourselves to use these facilities for the world-wide mission of the church.

### ***LITANY OF DEDICATION FORM 3 (FOR BUILDING):***

*LEADER:* Friends in Christ, we have assembled this Lord's Day to set apart this building to be a house of God. We believe that God has put it into our hearts to erect this building, and we know that God has guided our minds and strengthened our hands for the task. His Spirit

has moved our hearts to bring grateful tributes of our substance to be used for the glory of God and for people's salvation and blessing. We esteem this house a gift of the love of God to us and to our children and with joyful hearts we would dedicate this house to its sacred purpose. Being prospered by the hand of the Lord our God to finish the work which we are called to perform,

*PEOPLE:* We do now with gratitude and joy dedicate this house of worship.

*LEADER:* To the everlasting God, our Father, in whom we live and move and have our being; from whom comes every good and perfect gift; who so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this church.

*LEADER:* To Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who loved us and gave himself for us in his death on the cross; who arose again and lives forevermore; the way, the truth and the life,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this church.

*LEADER:* To the Holy Spirit, our comforter and guide, by whom alone is wrought renewal of heart, who leads to repentance; who works love; who gives the new life of faith in the Son of God,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this church.

*LEADER:* For the worship in prayer and praise; for the ministry of the Word of God and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior from sin; for the salvation of souls and the up building of the church in the grace and knowledge of our Lord; for the sharing of the ordinances,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this building.

*LEADER:* For the instruction of children and youth in the truths of the Christian faith; for the promotion of Christian character,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this building.

*LEADER:* For the blessing of the bride and groom who here solemnize their vows; and for the sanctifying of family life,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this church.

*LEADER:* For the comfort of those who mourn; for strength to those who are tempted; for help in Christian living,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this building.

*LEADER:* For sympathy and fellowship with the needy; for brotherhood with all humanity; for essential unity with all believers in Jesus Christ,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this building.

*LEADER:* For missionary endeavor, for evangelism, for Christian education; till all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,

*PEOPLE:* We dedicate this building.

*UNISON:* We now, the people of this congregation, grateful for our heritage and mindful of the sacrifices of our fathers and mothers, consecrate ourselves anew to the worship of God in spirit and in truth, and to the service of blessing our neighbors in this world in the spirit of Christ, and we dedicate this building with all its furnishings in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, AMEN.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION:*

These litanies are suggestions only and may be adapted to suit the particular need or occasion.

# *Solemnizing Marriages*

## **Introduction**

Every minister shares responsibility for improving the quality and happiness of marriages he or she solemnizes. Several factors will contribute to his pastoral effectiveness even before the couple requests the ceremony itself: Discussions, sermons, classes and literature in the Church School, Pastor's classes and worship services regarding the application of God's Word to personal identity, love, sex, marriage, finances, family life and related subjects.

Although the minister should not be expected to "have all the answers," he or she must be an informed professional and well-prepared in methods of guiding couples to enrich their relationships with each other both before and after marriage. For the minister, responsible preparation involves more than having a well-worded marriage ceremony handy. In addition to what appears in this Handbook, close examination of one or more books about premarital and marital counseling is a necessity.

There are several pastoral handbooks published by major publishers, and books that deal specifically with various aspects of pastoral ministry, such as weddings, funerals, dedications, visitation and pastoral calling. A pastor would be well advised to have several of these aids available in their library.

Occasionally, attend an open-church wedding solemnized by a minister from another church or another denomination. Ministers can learn much from each other.

## **Marriage Laws**

Laws concerning marriage vary according to each state. Before performing a marriage that is to be recognized by the state, a pastor should check with the appropriate state office regarding licensing requirements of officiants, necessary paperwork, and licensing, recording, and possible health reporting requirements or relational limitations (1<sup>st</sup> cousins, etc.) for persons being married.

It is advisable for the pastor to remember that he or she is first a representative of the church and Christ, joining two people in a Biblical covenant of marriage, and secondly performing a civil service for the state involving the legal joining of two people for purposes of mutual legal accountability under state law. Couples may choose to be married in the eyes of the church without seeking the civil protections of legal union or may seek the protections of a civil union without necessarily desiring to have a religious service, or choose that their marriage be both a religious service and a civil legal union. Pastors should determine, preferably with their church leadership, what options

they and the church are comfortable performing, and what, if any, specific restrictions, requirements, and limitations they may choose for the performance of civil and/or religious weddings, whether within the church, or by pastors outside of the church, and how this information will be communicated to couples seeking these services from the church and/or pastor.

It is wise to keep a reliable record of the date and place of every marriage and full names of couples involved.

*The pastor should present a marriage license issued by the court if a civil legal union, and/ or present the couple with an appropriate marriage certificate for the religious service.*

## **Premarital Guidance**

It is advisable to provide, and perhaps require, a series of pre-marital counseling sessions to discuss issues of communication, finances, spirituality, marital roles, changes in family dynamics, and marital intimacy with the couple. There are numerous study guides and video curricula available to assist in these classes, and the pastor should familiarize themselves with these resources before beginning the sessions.

The minister should inform his or her congregation that couples must contact him or her several months prior to their wedding so that adequate plans and several conferences can be scheduled.

## **The Rehearsal**

Appropriate planning ahead, understanding of the purposes of what is being done, and a well-ordered rehearsal are all essential to a wedding worship service that will honor God.

Encourage all participants to be present and on time - including ushers, parents, musicians, hostesses, bride and groom, and the complete wedding party. Because the wedding is a religious worship service in the church, do not hesitate to take charge of the rehearsal proceedings. Allow the bride and groom, however, to express their preferences where variations are permissible. Give attention to every detail so that every person knows what is expected of him or her and when.

When all are present, ask them all to come to the front of the sanctuary and be seated in the front pews. This opportunity to explain the meaning of the wedding, the procedures for the rehearsal and the contribution each one can make to the wedding is extremely important— and will greatly assist general understanding of the wedding's solemnity.

Remarks to this assembled group could be of this nature: “We welcome you all to our church and hope that this wedding might be a source of joy and meaning to everyone. “I’m Pastor (name) and these are the other people involved in the service from our church (introduce organist, soloist, etc.)”

“We’re thankful for the love of the bride and groom, and for this occasion which has brought us all together here. It will be helpful if we think for a moment just why we are here, and the purpose of the wedding to be held.”

“This couple considers their wedding a very serious matter. They have come for several hours of discussion and study in premarital conferences to become better prepared for marriage itself. We want all of you to sense this seriousness and make your contribution to the value of the event.”

“Marriage is both a happy and solemn occasion. The wedding, symbolizing the union of these two, is primarily a worship service. If not, we have no right to have it in the sanctuary. Naturally, we’ll be thinking about the bride and groom. But first and foremost, we come to worship God that through the wedding He might be honored most. Those attending should prepare themselves for it through prayer and anticipate receiving a spiritual blessing. Especially those in the wedding party and close relatives should come as you would to any religious service—with reverence and expectancy.”

“A wedding is a time for prayer. You yourselves can pray as you prepare yourselves to participate in the service. Thank God for His love and grace in teaching us how to love. Ask his blessing upon this couple. Acknowledge the presence of Christ, as well as the beautifully attired wedding party. These contributions by all of you will make the wedding more meaningful to everyone who attends.”

Close with prayer and proceed with the rehearsal. There will be times for a light touch and natural informal conversation, knowing how tense and self-conscious most participants are. However, don’t try to be the funny-man; he’s usually the bore. Without becoming stiff and sanctimonious, stress always the solemnity of this occasion.

For guidance concerning the parts and sequence of the service, consult the outline of procedures listed under “The Wedding” on the following pages.

## **The Wedding**

### *Introduction:*

In planning with the couple, emphasize that their wedding is first of all a Christian act of worship. As such it is an occasion to praise God as the giver of life and love, to thank Him for bringing them together, to beseech Him to guide and direct their relationship together as husband and wife, to acknowledge Him as being as much a part of marital union as the bride and groom, and to focus attention on Him as Creator, Sustainer, and Preserver of Life.

In addition to worshipping God, invite the spirit of Christ to be present. God’s example of a perfect marriage relationship was that which existed between Christ and the Church. It is



through Christ, as Mediator, that we worship God. Couples can only be Christian if their lives are Christian, transformed by Christ, and letting it show in actions, plans and dreams.

The wedding is symbolic of a covenant between two people who are in covenant with God. It is symbolic of the eternal significance of a marriage. It is a symbol of the fact that God joins a couple together, and we only recognize that union. Urge the couple to plan a simple wedding, planning nothing that will detract from what it really ought to be.

In keeping with the wedding as a Worship Service, a printed wedding bulletin is appropriate. The content can include such features as the names of the bride and groom, date and place of service, wedding music, order of service, words of hymns, wedding personnel, reception information, address of bride and groom, suggestions concerning taking of pictures, message from the bride and groom to guests, and a wedding prayer.

Wedding music must be a part of the worship experience. It is not for the entertainment of the guests, nor a means of getting the bridal party to their places. It must be a part of the praise and prayer of the service and, therefore, Christian in form and content. The wedding in the church should be sacred in every part, including the music. The music should be joyous, but not irreverent; solemn, but not sad; constantly affirming the meaning of the service; and should produce religious thoughts and emotions. Encourage the couple to choose their musicians and music with these considerations in mind. Inform them early of any restrictions on the music allowable in the church.

#### *Order of Service:*

**Prelude:** Organist can determine starting time, according to the timing of the music.

**Seating of Guests:** At the rehearsal, coach the ushers in an appropriate manner of escorting a lady to her seat.

**Lighting of Candles:** At the rehearsal, determine which usher or ushers will assume this responsibility, and when. It is usually best to light the candles when the prelude begins, thus releasing all ushers for other responsibilities as guests arrive.

**Honored relatives seated:** Includes any special aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. couple wants to honor.

**Groom's parents seated:** Mother escorted by usher, followed by father, seated on right side of aisle. At the rehearsal, decide which usher will do this.

**Bride's parents seated:** Mother escorted by usher, seated on left side of aisle. At the rehearsal, decide which usher.

Aisle cloth unrolled: At the rehearsal, determine which ushers will do this.

Vocal music: Optional at this point, but appropriate time for any special musical prayer or message.

Wedding Processional: Facing the front of the church, the men enter from the right front in this order: Minister, groom, best man, ushers. Women enter from the rear of the sanctuary, either down a center or left aisle, in this order: Bridesmaids, flower girl, matron or maid of honor, ring bearer, and bride (on father's left arm). Stately hymns make excellent music for processions, whether sung or played. (e.g. "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" or "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" or "O God, Our Help in Ages Past").

The following samples are only given as possible expressions for the various parts of the service.

The minister will benefit from compiling ideas and writing his or her own comments, phrases and message for the service, possibly dependent upon the beliefs and personalities of the bride and groom. Some ministers may want to involve the couple in the preparation of the remarks.

### **BRIEF ORDER OF SERVICE (without presentation by father, vows, or exchange of rings):**

Message: Dear Friends, we are gathered in the presence of God and of one another to join this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. Marriage is an ordinance of God and as such is esteemed honorable among men. It was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden. Christ adorned and beautified this holy estate by his presence at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. It is a relationship entered into not for a day or a year, but a lifetime; and therefore it is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but it must be understood that it is a relationship to be assumed reverently and in the fear of God.

Betrothal Promises: Do You (H) take this woman to be your wedded wife? Do you promise to love, honor and to cherish her, and to assist and support her in the labors of life? Do you thus pledge yourself to be her husband, to cleave to her and to her alone so long as you both shall live? (He will answer, I do).

Do you (W) take this man to be your wedded husband? Do you promise to love, to honor and to cherish him and to assist him in the labors of life? Do you thus pledge yourself to be his wife and to cleave to him and to him alone so long as you both shall live? (She will answer, I do).

Pronouncement (as they join right hands): Forasmuch as (H) and (W) have consented together in Holy Wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and these witnesses, and thereto have pledged their mutual faith, each to the other by joining their right hands, I now pronounce them husband and wife, and what God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

Prayer:

## **SAMPLE ORDER FOR A FORMAL SERVICE:**

Processional Hymn: (During the congregational singing of the hymn, the wedding party proceeds down the aisles to the front pews and is seated, as the minister takes his or her place behind the pulpit.)

Call to Worship: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Invocation: Great Spirit of God, breathe upon this scene thy blessing. Sanctify the purposes which have led these two people to this moment. Bless them as they take their vows so that they may do it with all of the sincerity of which they are capable. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Word of God: The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” (Gen. 2:18)

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: “Haven’t you read that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

The Apostle Paul, writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, said: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (Eph. 5:22-33)

The Apostle Paul also writes: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13:4-7, 13)

And the Psalmist writes:

“Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. May you live to see your children’s children— peace be on Israel.” (Psalm 128)

Message: Dearly beloved, we are assembled here in the presence of God, to join this man and this woman in holy marriage; which is instituted of God, regulated by His commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor among all men. Let us therefore reverently remember that God has established and sanctified marriage, for the welfare and happiness of mankind. Our Savior has declared that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. By His apostles, He has instructed those who enter into this relation to cherish a mutual esteem and love; to bear with each other’s infirmities and weaknesses; to comfort each other in sickness, trouble, and sorrow; in honesty and industry to provide for each other, and for their household in temporal things; to pray for and encourage each other in the things which pertain to God; and to live together as heirs of the grace of life.

Forasmuch as these two persons have come hither to be made one in this holy estate, if there be any here present who knows any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined in marriage, I require them now to make it known, or ever after to hold their peace.

Prayer:

Vocal Solo or Anthem: (At the conclusion wedding party rises and comes forward to meet the minister at the front of the sanctuary).

Betrothal Promises: (H), Will you take this woman to be your wife, and will you pledge your loyalty to her, in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with her, and cherish her, according to the ordinance of God, in the holy bond of marriage? (He will answer, I will).

(W), Will you take this man to be your husband, and will you pledge your loyalty to him, in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with him, and cherish him, according to the ordinance of God, in the holy bond of marriage? (She will answer, I will).

Presentation of Bride by Father: Who gives this woman to be married to this man? (Father will answer, I do; or, Her mother and I).

Wedding Vows: (Groom repeats after minister) I,(H), take you, (W), to be my wedded wife; and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be your loving and faithful husband; in plenty and in want; in joy and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; as long as we both shall live.

(Bride repeats after minister) I, (W), take you, (H), to be my wedded husband; and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be your loving and faithful wife; in plenty and in want; in joy and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; as long as we both shall live.

Exchange of Rings: Bless, O Lord, this ring, that he who gives it and she who wears it may abide in Your peace, and continue in Your favor, unto their life's end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Groom repeats after minister) This ring I give you, in token and pledge, of our constant faith, and abiding love.

Bless, O Lord, this ring, that she who gives it and he who wears it may abide in Your peace, and continue in Your favor, unto their life's end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Bride repeats after minister) This ring I give you, in token and pledge, of our constant faith, and abiding love.

Pronouncement as Husband and Wife: By the authority committed to me as a minister of the Gospel, I declare that (H) and (W) are now husband and wife, according to the ordinance of God, and the law of the State of (state); in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Whom therefore God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Prayer:

Embrace:

Recessional Hymn (Sung by congregation, as wedding party and parents leave):

Benediction: “The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and in the life everlasting.” Amen.

Postlude (Dismissal of Guests)

### **SAMPLE ORDER FOR TRADITIONAL SERVICE:**

Invocation: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. You in whom we live and move and have our being, who are acquainted with all our ways and knows our path, we invite Your presence with us, gathered here in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, to join together this man and this woman in the bonds of holy matrimony. Amen.

Word of God: In God's Word we read that there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Both Jesus and his disciples were called to the marriage. And we read that he graced the occasion with his presence.

“God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God created he them. And God said it is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him.” (Gen. 1:27; 2:18)

“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.” (Prov. 18:22; 31:12)

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh.” (Mat. 19:5-6a)

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Eph. 5:25-27)

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” (Eph. 5:22-24)

“Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (Eph. 5:33)

“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love” (Eph. 5:1)

Message: Dearly beloved in the Lord: Marriage is an ordinance of God. It was first ordained by him in the Garden of Eden. Our Lord Jesus himself graced with his presence the wedding at Cana of Galilee. St. Paul declares it to be an honorable estate among all men. There is but one relation in life more sacred than this, that which exists between each of you and your Maker; there is but one relation more endearing and intimate, that which exists between Christ the heavenly Bridegroom and the Church his Bride. Marriage is a joyous occasion. We associate therewith in our thoughts all the magical charms of home and all that is beautiful and uplifting in the most tender and most sacred relations of life, it is a relationship which is assumed for a lifetime and should therefore be entered upon reverently and in the fear of God.

However, before I pronounce the words designating these two as man and wife, permit me to charge you two, and all persons here present, that if any or several of you know any reason why these two lives should not be now joined in the holy bonds of matrimony, let the facts be now made known, or else hereafter forever hold your peace.

Prayer:

Betrothal Promises: Do you (H) take (W) to be your wedded wife, to live together after God’s Holy Ordinance in the estate of matrimony? Do you promise to love, to respect and to cherish her, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and adversity? Do you promise to assist and support her in the labors of life? Do you thus pledge yourself to be her husband so long as you both shall live? If so, will you answer, “With God’s help, I do.” (He replies)

Do you (W) take (H) to be your wedded husband, to live together after God’s Holy Or-

dinance in the estate of matrimony? Do you promise to love, to honor, to sustain and to cherish him, in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and adversity, and to be faithful unto him as becomes a good wife? Do you thus pledge yourself to be his wife so long as you both shall live? If so, will you answer, "With God's help, I do." (She replies).

Presentation of Bride by Father: Who gives this woman to be married to this man? (Father, or friend, replies, "I do" as he joins the bride and groom's right hands together).

Wedding Vows: I (H), take thee, (W) to be my wedded wife; to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.

I (W), take thee (H), to be my wedded husband; to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.

Exchange of Rings: (To the Groom) What token and pledge do you offer that you will faithfully perform these covenant vows? (Groom replies, "This ring.")

(To the Bride) Do you accept this ring in token of the same covenant on your part? (Bride replies, "I do.")

(Note: As the bride answers "I do" the groom hands her the ring. The bride receives the ring and hands it to the minister.) Bless, O Lord, this ring, that he who gives it and she who wears it may abide in Your peace, and continue in Your favor, unto their life's end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Minister hands it to the groom and he places it on the third finger of the bride's left hand, and repeats after the minister.) With this ring I thee wed, and with all my worldly goods and my heart's faithful affection I thee endow. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(For the double ring ceremony, repeat with the bride providing the ring and making the responses.)

Pronouncement as Husband and Wife: (As groom and bride join right hands, minister places his right hand on theirs,) Forasmuch as (H) and (W) have consented together in Holy Wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth, each to the other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving of rings, and joining hands, I now, by the authority vested in me by Almighty God and the State of (state) pronounce them husband and wife, and what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

Prayer:

Solo (if desired):



Benediction: And now, may God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve and keep you; the Lord mercifully with His favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that you may live together in this life, that in the world to come you may have eternal life, in Christ. Amen.

Embrace: You may symbolize your love for each other with a kiss.

### **SAMPLE ORDER FOR CONTEMPORARY SERVICE:**

Message to the Audience: Friends, you have been invited to share the joy of a couple who have chosen each other as husband and wife. According to the Christian principle that for this purpose a man and woman shall leave their parental families and begin on their own, they desire to establish a new family.

They love each other, but mature judgment tells them that love alone is not enough; that it must have an understanding environment in which to grow. Out of this exploration has come the realization of amazing similarities of personality traits, likes and dislikes, and an array of mutual interests.

Also, differences have been revealed, but they accept these as assets, giving spice and variety to their relationship. It fits well into their feeling that individuality should be maintained, as well as union established, in the marriage relationship. It is in accord with their belief that husband and wife are equal and share alike in all the responsibilities of married living.

Getting to know each other has involved coming to an understanding of family backgrounds and experiences, friends, social, and educational interests. Although of the same religious denomination, they have felt it wise to explore religious beliefs with a view toward continued growth and development of their faith.

Attitudes toward work and finances have been discussed, and plans made for the future that will promote security and at the same time be conducive to family living.

Knowing that it represents a vital part of husband-wife relationships, these two have studied the role of sex in human life, and have formulated an ethic as a guide for the future. They see sexual energy as a gift from God, a basic part of human nature, to be accepted gratefully and used for purposes in harmony with His will, in keeping with the best interests of mankind. They see sexual feeling as an important part of the total emotional development, a powerful stimulus toward the assumption of adult responsibilities of loving and of caring for a family. It affords an opportunity to learn how to have one's own needs for affection and love met and to meet those of the mate.

Sexual expressions within a happy marriage are a source of health for the entire person. The emotional overtones of adult love, the giving and receiving of love, flavor all of life.



Message to the Couple: (H) and (W) you have come to the beginning of life's most difficult, and yet most thrilling adventure, the establishment of a permanent relationship to one person. It is a relationship in which the love of God can best express itself to each of you, and through you to others.

You will want it to be a stable, and yet ever-changing relationship, in which your love can spring forth, mature, flower, and bear its fruit. A good pattern for that love is given in 1 Corinthians 13: "Love is patient and kind, love is not jealous or boastful, is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way, is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends—Faith, Hope and Love abide, but the greatest of these is Love."

I charge you both, as you stand in the presence of God, to remember that love and loyalty alone will avail as the foundations of a happy and enduring home. If the solemn vows which you are about to make be kept permanent, and if steadfastly you seek to do the will of your Heavenly Father, your life will be full of peace and joy, and the home which you are establishing will abide through every change.

Betrothal Promises: (H), in the spirit of God's love, desiring to establish a home where you can learn to meet her needs for affection and love, and have your own needs met, and where children can grow in calm security, we understand that you have chosen (W) to be your wife and the mother of your children. (Groom replies, "That is true.")

(W), in the spirit of God's love, desiring to establish a home where you can learn to meet his needs for affection and love, and have your own needs met, and where children can grow in peace and security, we understand that you have chosen (H) to be your husband, and the father of your children. (Bride replies, "That is true.")

Wedding Vows and Exchange of Rings: (Minister receives ring from best man, after which groom says to bride,) (W), just as I am, and as I hope to become, I offer myself to you as a husband whose love will try to be tender, patient, thoughtful, and understanding, through all the experiences of our life.

(Minister says,) This simple band is symbolic of the unbroken bond of love that these two pledge to one another. The circular form of the ring symbolizes the endless devotion which they both have for each other. (Groom receives ring from minister and, as he places it on her finger, says,) As a token of my faith in your love for me, as a sign of our mutual hope of bringing to each other continued happiness, I give you this ring and pledge you my love and devotion forever.

(Minister receives ring from matron of honor, after which bride says to groom,) (H), in keeping with that spiritual union which already we have experienced, I accept your ring, and, I accept you as my husband. I present myself as your wife, promising a love that will be tender, patient, thoughtful, and understanding, through all the days of our life together.

(Bride receives ring from minister and, as she places it on his finger, says to groom,) I should like to give you a ring also, in the assurance that our love springs from, and shall be guided by, the Love Eternal.

(Minister says,) The marriage vows which you have made this day are voluntary and equal, the same in meaning for the man as for the woman. Regard them not as burdens to weigh you down, but as winged hopes and promises to bear you up to a more abundant life. Remember that true love is not the passion to possess and rule, but the desire to give, and to share, and to bless. Let no secret divide, no rivalry estrange, and no difference embitter your hearts, but seek by openness, reason, and goodwill to find the spiritual key of peace. Be not elated by prosperity, nor overcome by adversity, but study to be open with one another and maintain a firm faith in God.

Pronouncement as Husband and Wife: Inasmuch as (H) and (W) before God and these witnesses, have dedicated themselves to the establishing of a home, I declare that, with all the responsibilities and privileges attending, they are husband and wife, united in their love for each other, in their love for God, and in His love for them.

Prayer:

*Wedding Recessional and Postlude:*

(The organist should be requested to select sacred music, in keeping with the atmosphere and spirit of worship and rejoicing. Again, as was true with the Processional, stately hymns serve this purpose quite well).

Bride's parents: Escorted out by an usher (designated at rehearsal)

Groom's parents: Escorted out by an usher (designated at rehearsal)

Reception line formed: Usually the line forms in the vestibule or the room where the reception is planned, in this order:

Mother of bride

Mother of groom

Father of groom

Father of bride

Bride

Groom

Maid of Honor

Bridesmaids

(Note: Ushers and best man are never in receiving line).

Congregation dismissed: Responsibility of ushers as they return to the sanctuary and dismiss guests by rows.

## Marital Guidance

Although the minister's official legal responsibilities are fulfilled with the signing of the marriage license and returning the stub to the Probate Court, the moral and spiritual obligations continue. His or her most meaningful contacts with the couple and their families are just beginning when the wedding and reception are complete.

The first year of marriage is considered by most counselors to be the most crucial. After bringing the couple to the marriage ceremony, the minister shouldn't leave them or their parents to face this first year alone with only hit or miss intrusions. With some direction and planning, the minister's closeness to the couple can continue smoothly and naturally, providing greatly needed stability and purpose in these days of adjustment. In some ways, the overshadowing value of the premarital conferences was to develop a rapport with the couple that welcomes the minister's presence in their home following marriage. Some counselors firmly believe that much more good can be done during the first year of marriage as problems and adjustments arise than during any number of encounters and conferences prior to the wedding.

Serious needs arise during this period after the wedding in both the couple's home and those of their parents. The minister should plan to be there to help.

*Contacts with the Parents:* The minister should keep in touch with both sets of parents soon after the wedding. Don't let them become the forgotten people as everyone centers attention on the newlyweds. Give them opportunity to talk about and adjust to their sudden loneliness, their hands-off roles, and their feelings of not being needed any longer by those who used to depend upon them for everything.

*Contacts with the Couple:* Look for opportunities to be in contact with the couple through sharing of literature, planned consultations, and crisis situations. Guide them with such things as appreciating marriage, changing love's expression, becoming "one," experimenting with routines, learning to be separated at times, sharing responsibilities, addressing annoyances, communicating openly, acknowledging frustrations, and developing devotional patterns.

# *Ministry to the Sick*

There are several pastoral handbooks published by major publishers, and books that deal specifically with various aspects of pastoral ministry, such as weddings, funerals, dedications, visitation and pastoral calling. A pastor would be well advised to have several of these aids available in his or her library.

## **CRISES MINISTRY**

As we search the Scriptures we see Jesus constantly ministering to the needs of the crippled, the sick, the blind . . . the living and the dying. We hear him say: "...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40) We who bear his name, especially we who are pastors, must surely feel a burden of responsibility to minister as He ministered to the sick and the dying in their need.

The family in illness (and the pastor) find new opportunities to face up to things as they are, to resolve previously unresolved conflicts, to demonstrate a deeper love than has been demonstrated before, to initiate new patterns of adjustment and to deepen the sense of religious reality. To lay hold of this opportunity is the calling of the pastor.

## **VISITS TO THE SICK**

Visits to the sick should be brief, helpful and deeply spiritual, not an affected spirituality nor a show of fervor. Instead model a quiet, hopeful and gentle ministry of a life that is devoted to the people over whom the Holy Spirit has made us a pastor. An appropriate verse or more of Scripture and a prayer is quite enough on most occasions. However, the pastor should use all of his or her skill to be helpful to the sick. Be sure to avoid all intrusion upon the province of the physician.

## **ANOINTING THE SICK**

The Anointing Service is a very special privilege of the believer and a ministry to the sick that pastors should be ready to comply with upon request. They should always have oil for anointing on hand and have in mind the names of Deacons, or Elders, who might be available to assist in the service. They should be thoroughly conversant with the Word of God as found in James 5:14-18.

Keep the service brief, yet impressive, by reflecting abiding faith in the promise “the prayer of faith shall save the sick.” (For further assistance on The Anointing Service see the “anointing” section of this handbook.)

## **MINISTRY TO THE TERMINALLY ILL**

Ministry to the terminally ill must always be a positive ministry. If the person is a Christian, draw upon the person’s faith to offer encouragement and support. Read scripture appropriate to the circumstance (Psalm 23, Psalm 33:18-19, Psalm 31:19-20, Romans 8:16-18: 35-39, etc.). To strengthen his faith in these last days or hours, not to answer the “whys” of sickness, is the minister’s task.

If the patient is not a Christian then the pastor has a two-fold concern. He or she must not only seek to bring comfort, but also must be concerned for the person’s spiritual welfare. If the patient has not been told he or she is dying, or does not sense it, the pastor should consult the doctor to ascertain the reasons and to explain his or her own concern. A pastor should not oppose the physician unless the patient shows definite signs of repentance and faith.

The eternal welfare of the patient’s soul is the pastor’s responsibility. With humility and kindness the pastor should counsel the patient into an understanding of the importance of repentance and faith in either life or death.

## **MINISTERING TO THE FAMILY**

The pastor’s most fruitful ministry will usually be with the family of the dying. It may be too late to help the patient, but the pastor can exercise a fruitful ministry to the family. The pastor is the one person equipped to help persons in situations of crisis find their way “out of all their afflictions.”

The pastor should seek to draw off strong negative emotions, by helping to clarify confusing options and ethical decisions and by representing the love and concern of the Body of Christ. It is increasingly apparent that five minutes of glib chatting and prayer of resignation seldom serve as an adequate ministry to the sick or dying, or the families of such. The pastor must assist both patient and family to clear up conflicts and to an understanding of God’s love and grace.

The image of the pastor is one that exemplifies the spirit of Him who came to comfort and to heal broken relationships. This has been the particular ministry of the pastor and the church because the church has something to say about death. The relationship which the pastor has had with the grief-stricken affects how much help he or she can bring in time of grief crises. Usually because pastors can be more objective than relatives and friends, the pastor can communicate the concern of the God whom they serve, the Church they represent, and the community in which they live and work. They can, by their presence, symbolize that profound hope which is not always verbalized—that God does not forsake His children in the most critical periods of their existence.

Pastors should not treat casually, or in a remote formal manner, this ministry. They have a wonderful opportunity to engage the personalities of the sorrowing family in the constructive work of mourning, and they are guilty of professional negligence if they fail to do wisely and well what they are called upon to do.

Pastors must bring comfort, maintain contact, and help people deal wisely with their problems and face the reality of their situation. Pastors must exercise a “support ministry” yet also be careful of two things: (1) Failure to lead people to gradually assume more and more responsibility on their own: (2) Too rapid a withdrawal of the support ministry. Great wisdom and much prayer must be exercised in every and all crisis ministries.

# *The Burial of the Dead*

## **Some Basic Instructions**

The burial of the dead calls for the most sympathetic and spiritual service the pastors can render to their people. As soon as the minister learns of the death of a member he or she should pay a visit to the home. Ministers should make themselves available to the family in carrying out their wishes. They should make suggestions only when asked. It is not necessary to accompany the family to the mortuary when choices of services are to be made. However, if the family invites you to be with them at this time, then you should go.

The minister should be calm, quiet, and dignified in all matters when called upon to serve a family in time of bereavement.

If a minister is known to funeral directors as a person of sympathy, of love, and conducts memorial services in a short, precise and dignified way, he or she is called on many times to conduct services for the unchurched. This is a good opportunity to be able to give spiritual assistance to members of families outside the church.

There are many books and helps on the market to aid the minister in the conduct of memorial services. Funeral Directors can also supply helps. A minister should have such resources in his or her library.

If a minister is called upon to conduct many memorial services during the course of the year, there is the danger of his or her services becoming mechanical and impersonal, and there is no real feeling for those who are in sorrow. Every minister must guard against this sin. Give of your best during the time of sorrow in the lives of others. The Scriptures admonish us to share the joys and sorrow of others.

Most memorial services today are conducted in the chapel of the funeral home. This is good and appropriate for those who have no church homes. However, if an individual is a devoted Christian, and has been active many years in his or her church, the family should be encouraged to have the memorial services in the church. This can be a witness to the community of the importance of the church in the life and the death of a Christian.

## **THE ORDER OF SERVICE**

The order of service should be precise and as short as possible. It should be discussed with the family, and also the funeral director should know what the order of service will be. The minister should be flexible about the type of service a family desires. The service must always be dignified.

A short, dignified order of service can be as follows:

The Invocation

Obituary (optional)

The Scripture

The Prayer

Eulogies or Remarks (optional)

The Message

The Benediction

At the cemetery there will be the committal and the Benediction. This, too, should be short.

Of course, this order of service can vary. If the family wants singing during the memorial service, this can be done following the Invocation; or just before the message; or immediately following the message. Many times special organ music is requested instead of the singing. This can be worked in just as the singing.

The minister should always respect the wishes of the family, at the same time making suggestions that would improve the order of service. Also, the choosing of music should be in keeping with a Christian service. Even if the deceased is not Christian, the cause of Christ should always be foremost in the mind of the minister.

The message should always be short. It should contain comfort and hope for those who are in the audience. The minister should speak to those who are living.

In many cases the deceased will be a member of some fraternal order. Make it a policy that such organizations do not interfere with your order of a Christian service. If they must have a parting service for the deceased, they can have it earlier; or at the cemetery following the minister's committal service.

Pastors must always keep in mind that they are servants of God; therefore, they must conduct themselves as such in the planning and conducting of memorial services for the deceased.

## **COMMITTALS FOR FUNERAL OCCASIONS**

Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God, in his wise providence, to take out of this world the soul of our deceased brother (or sister), we therefore commit his (her) body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of



the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose second coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead, and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed and made like unto His own glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

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We are come here to lay our dead out of sight in the grave. But we sorrow not as those who have no hope. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we commit all that is mortal of this our brother (or sister) to the earth from whence it came; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. And to Him who sits on high, in whose hands are the keys of death and hell, we look for that resurrection of the body whereof he was the first fruits from the dead.

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It is written, "Dust you are and to dust you will return." (Gen. 3:19) And we know that soon or later we, too, must go the way of all the earth. But we believe in one who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we therefore commit this body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; trusting to find in Him our comfort in this life and in the world to come life everlasting. And to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, one God shall be praise for evermore. Amen.

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Our Heavenly Father: In Your infinite wisdom You have seen fit to call back to Yourself the sweet, pure spirit of this little child, so we commit the tender body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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We have come to lay all that is mortal of this young man (or woman) in the silent city of the dead; but we sorrow not as others who have no hope, for we believe in Him Who said: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." (John 11:25-26a) We therefore commit this body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in the glorious hope of the resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord unto everlasting life. Amen.

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In the midst of life we are in death. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. And now we commit the mortal remains of this our friend and brother (or sister) to the earth from

which it came, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, and this we do in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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And now, as we stand beside this open grave, in this silent city of the dead, we commit this body to the ground; earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, and we commit the spirit, O our Father, together with every sacred interest of our hearts, into Your keeping; praying that You would deal graciously and mercifully with each of us, until we too come to You in Glory, through riches of grace in Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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*NOW THE LABORER'S TASK IS O'ER*

Now the laborer's task is o'er;  
Now the battle day is past;  
Now upon the farther shore,  
Lands the voyager at last.  
Father, in thy gracious keeping  
Leave we not Thy servant sleeping.  
There the tears of earth are dried:  
There the hidden things are clear;  
There the work of life is tried  
By a juster Judge than here.  
Father, in Thy gracious keeping  
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.  
There the penitents that turn  
To the cross their dying eyes  
All the love of Jesus learn,  
At His feet in Paradise.  
Father, in Thy gracious keeping  
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.  
Now we lift our tear-dimmed eyes  
To the smiling skies above,

And we know our dear one lies  
In the bosom of Thy Love.  
Father, in Thy gracious keeping  
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.

—John Ellerton.

(The reading of the above poem for a committal makes one of the most comforting and at the same time most fully Scriptural teachings concerning the state of the dead.)

### **FOR A CHRISTIAN AFTER LONG ILLNESS AND SUFFERING**

(Read Rom. 8:16-19; 2 Cor. 1:3-6; 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Now unto the eternal Giver of Life we turn again, committing unto Him the spirit departed from this body of suffering. Here we bring the deserted form of flesh and consign it to its last resting place in the bosom of mother earth, maintaining the firm conviction of Christian hope that the day will come, when, at the command of God the earth and sea shall give up their dead in that glorious resurrection, and they who are His shall be glorified together with Him, and transported to an eternal home in heavenly glory. May the Lord bear witness to our faith, pour out upon the sorrowing His soothing and comforting Spirit, and keep the remaining members of this broken circle under His constant care from day to day, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

### **FOR A BELIEVER**

(Read Psalm 89:48; Isa. 38:18; Hos. 13:14)

The Psalmist rightly said, “Who can live and not see death, or who can escape the power of the grave?” (Psalm 89:48)

Also the praying Hezekiah said, “... the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise.” (Isa 38:18)

But the prophet, Hosea, reports God’s promise, “I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?” (Hosea 13:14a)

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26a) Believing, therefore, that God has made ample provision for bridging the grave with redeeming love, we commit this

body to the ground, that it may return to the dust as it was, and that the spirit may be clothed upon with immortality.

### **FOR A BELIEVER**

(Read 1 Cor. 15:42-44; John 11:25-26)

Because the Christian does not believe that death and the grave mark the end of life, but are the portals of a fuller life in heaven, we come to the graveside to express our faith and hope. We have confidence in Christ's words, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die." (John 11:25). We now commit this body of clay to the earth that it may return to the dust from which it came. The spirit, we know, has departed to be with its Maker and to join the redeemed of the ages. Death has lost its sting and the grave has lost its victory, for when Jesus comes He shall bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Him. Beloved, comfort ye your hearts with this hope.

### **FOR ONE NOT A BELIEVER**

(Read Jeremiah 9:21.)

Life, at best, is short. The heart beats are stopped, the hand has lost its cunning, and the arm its power. The eye and the ear can no longer record the beauties about them. The body of flesh has lost that which animated it and become but inert material, composed only of the elements of the earth and tends to revert to its simplest forms. Loving hands have ministered to every need, and now there is nothing more we can do. We have come, of necessity, to the grave, the end of all living, and commit this body of earthly clay to its natural elements. The ground receives its own, for out of the ground was it taken. Let us all lay it to heart that there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave where we are about to come.

### **FOR ONE NOT A BELIEVER**

(Read Psalms 39:4, 5; 103:13-17.)

The frailty of the flesh teaches us to prepare, while living, for the day when we shall return the body to its native elements, and the world shall know us no more. We have come to that day for this, our friend, whose days were completed and the book of his/her life closed. Our hands are unable to minister further than this: that we now commit his/her body to the quiet of its resting place beneath the caresses of nature. The winds and the birds may mark the place that man may forget, and only those who stop to meditate on the brevity of life will think to prepare themselves for the great and inevitable day.



A RESOURCE OF THE BRETHREN CHURCH