



Additional Worship Resources for Congregations and Presbyteries in Transition

Litany of Praise

This is from the service for Vacating a Church Building (*Book of Common Worship* 2018, p. 551–2). It acknowledges the congregation’s ministry in that place as faithful and cherished, even as it moves to a different location or comes to an end.

LITANY OF PRAISE

— *The moderator leads the people:*

Eternal God,
whom the highest heaven cannot contain,
much less a building made by human hands,
hear us as we pray:

we praise you, O God.

For the Church universal,
of which this building has been a symbol,

we praise you, O God.

For all the saints who,
in times past and present,
have formed a congregation of your people
and have met in this place
to offer their prayers and praise to you,

we praise you, O God.

For those who have been made your children
by adoption and grace,
who in this place were cleansed of sin,
buried with Christ in the waters of baptism,
and raised to new and eternal life,

we praise you, O God.

For your presence
whenever your word has been proclaimed and
your sacramental gifts of bread and wine received,
we praise you, O God.

For your blessing upon each of your children,
welcomed and nurtured here,

we praise you, O God.

For all who came to ask your blessing in marriage,
seeking to love with your love,
we praise you, O God.

For faithful stewards who have lived for others,
serving you by loving neighbors,

we praise you, O God.

For all who, having lived this life in faith,
were commended to your loving care
and now live eternally with you,

we praise you, O God.

— *The moderator declares the assurance of God's forgiving grace.*

Hear the good news of the gospel!
You are no longer strangers and aliens,
but members together of the household of God,
built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles,
with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.
In him the whole structure is joined together
and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
Christ himself is our peace;
in his flesh he has made us into one.

Eph. 2:19–21, 14

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Amen or **Thanks be to God.**

— *Lifting water from the font or pool, the moderator addresses the people:*

Remember your baptism and be thankful!

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.
For to this peace we are called
as members of a single body.

Col. 3:15

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

And also with you.

— *The people may exchange with one another, by words and gesture, signs of peace and reconciliation.*

Litany of Confession

This is a comprehensive confession of sin (*Book of Common Worship* 2018, p. 452–4) that might be used for a communal service of wholeness and healing, whether at the congregational or presbytery level. It emphasizes our baptismal unity while acknowledging our failure to live into the promises of our baptism.

CONFESSION OF SIN — A LITANY

— *Water may be poured into the baptismal font. The presider leads the call to confession.*

Sovereign God,
in baptism you called us to turn from sin
and to turn to Jesus Christ;
but we stray from his ways
and do not heed your call.

— *Silence*

Lord, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

In baptism you joined us to Christ in his death
that we might be raised with Christ in new life;
but we cherish old ways
and fail to embrace the risen life
of righteousness, justice and love.

— *Silence*

Lord, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

In baptism you united us with all the baptized
who confess your name;
but we foster division in the church.

Anyone who is in Christ
is a new creation.
The old life has gone;
a new life has begun.

I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven. **Amen** or **Thanks be to God.**

Litany of Confession and Repentance

This litany of confession and repentance was written by the Rev. Warren Lesane Jr. for a gathering of African-American congregations in the Presbytery of Charlotte in 2011. It may be abbreviated, adapted or used as a model for other acts of confession and repentance.

Leader: We confess that —

Clergy: *as teaching elders, we are not equipped
to lead our congregations faithfully into the 21st century,
nor have we sought the necessary opportunities
to learn new skills in order to become better leaders.*

Leader: We confess that —

Elders: *as ruling elders, we have repeatedly adopted the same old vision,
programs, budgets and ministries, year after year,
and our churches are no better off.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *we have depended we have depended on the presbytery, synod,
and General Assembly to take care of us —
while failing to rise up as the people of God
we were created to be.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *leadership at every level in the church is highly resistant to change.
We quickly resort to sabotaging ministries
to prevent change from occurring.
Further, we are guilty of financially blackmailing the church
if the change affects us.*

Leader: We confess that —

Clergy: *too many times, we failed to admit that the sun has set on our ministry
and we have refused to open a door for others
on whose ministries the sun is beginning to rise.*

Leader: We confess that —

Elders: *as ruling elders, the Book of Order has been our Bible,
while the Old and New Testaments sit at home accumulating dust.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *we depend on others to take care of our churches,
while we use our personal resources to take vacations,
buy larger homes and entertain ourselves,
while only giving to God's ministries a few dollars here and there.*

All: *we are unwilling to reach out to strangers and give them our seats.
We become irate when someone sits on our pew.
Yet our congregations are dying, some rapidly, some moderately,
while others appear OK but are aging rapidly.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *our congregations claim to want strong and visionary pastoral leadership,
but when pastors lead us into prophetic ministry opportunities
where we have no control,
sessions and members revoke pastors' leadership privileges.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *we allow families with money, position and power to hijack God's church —
hence no ministry has a chance of success without securing their permission.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *our worship services have lost their joy.
We go through the motions of worship,
listening to unrehearsed choirs struggle with selections,
watching members habitually enter worship late and,
in the end, God's people return into the world
untouched by the saving grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *we seldom live up to our ordination vows
of being a friend among our colleagues in ministry, working with them,
subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit.*

Leader: We confess that —

All: *many congregations, sessions and search committees are sexist.
We invest heavily in nurturing, recruiting, educating
and training women for the office of teaching elder,
yet our churches refuse to call them as pastors because of gender.*

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: *And also with you.*

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

Leader: We give thanks, Eternal God,
for you nourish and sustain all living things by the gift of water.
In the beginning of time, your Spirit moved over the watery chaos,
calling forth order and life.

People: *In the time of Noah, you destroyed evil by the waters of the flood,
giving righteousness a new beginning.*

Leader: You led Israel out of slavery, through the waters of the sea,
into the freedom of the promised land.

People: *In the water of Jordan,
Jesus was baptized by John and anointed with your Spirit.
By the baptism of his own death and resurrection,
Christ set us free from sin and death, and opened the way to eternal life.*

Litany of Commissioning

This litany for commissioning from the Thrive Project of the Presbyteries of Grand Canyon and De Cristo was written by the Rev. Dr. Brad Munroe, drawing on Scripture and the *Book of Order*. It may be abbreviated, adapted or used as a model for other acts of commissioning.

LITANY

There are different gifts.

But it is the same Spirit who gives them.

There are different ways of serving God.

But it is the same Lord who is served.

God works through different persons in different ways.

But it is the same God who achieves the divine purpose through them all.

Each one is given a gift by the Spirit to use for the common good.

Together we are the body of Christ and individually members of him.

We are called out by God to be the Church of Jesus Christ,
a sign in the world today of the new life that God intends for all.

In our life together, we are to display the new reality
that sin is forgiven, reconciliation accomplished,
and the dividing walls of hostility torn down.

As the living body of Christ, the church is called

***to proclaim the good news of salvation,
to present the claims of the gospel on human lives and
to demonstrate Christ's love in service to the world.***

We are called to undertake this mission even at the risk of life,
trusting God in all things.

Therefore, in faith we embrace

***a new openness to what God is doing in our time,
a renewed obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and
a new joy in our common worship and work.***

Today we reclaim our historic calling
and remember the Great Ends of the Church:

***the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
the shelter, nurture and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
the maintenance of divine worship;
the preservation of the truth;
the promotion of social righteousness; and
the exhibition of the kingdom of heaven to the world.***

To those present whose sessions have covenanted with the presbytery
to participate in the Thrive Project:

Do you desire for your church to experience
renewed commitment to Christ's mission
renewed openness to the Spirit's leading
and deeper faithfulness to God's call upon your life together?

We so desire.

Do you promise to seek the will of Christ,
to be led by the Holy Spirit,
and to glorify God in all you do?

We so promise.

For wounds not healed,
Lord, have mercy.

For gifts not shared,
Lord, have mercy.

For promises not kept,
Lord, have mercy.

— *A session representative continues:*

Let us give thanks for our journey together in this place:

For friendships made,
for joys celebrated
and for times of nurture and growth,
thanks be to God.

For wounds healed,
expectations met,
gifts given and promises kept,
thanks be to God.

For our fellowship in Jesus Christ,
and for the love of God, which has sustained us,
thanks be to God.

— *The presbytery representative prays:*

Loving God, Alpha and Omega,
you are both beginning and end.
Our endings and our beginnings
are rooted in your love.
Whether near or far,
we are held close by your love,
and kept safe from any lasting loss.
Let our time together end with your blessing.
Touch all memories with your grace and peace.
Help us to live with courage and gladness
in the future you present us.
In every time and place,
may we offer you our highest and our best;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Alleluia! or Amen.