

**THE
BRETHREN
PASTOR'S HANDBOOK
(2004 Revision)**



"But Let All Things Be Done Decently And In Order" —I Col. 14:40

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PREFACE

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 I Cor. 14:40. "Let all things be done decently and in order."

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

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

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

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.

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.

G. Emery Hurd, editor
August 2004

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THE CHURCH

I. General Statement

From the Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church, Chapter One, Section I. 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 forward 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 Savior, who have been previously baptized by believers' immersion and who evidence a personal faith and walk in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Article 2. Mission. The normal process for church development and recognition shall involve two stages: mission and church. A mission may be formed by the coming together of people from one locality who desire fellowship with one another and who share a common desire to form a Brethren congregation. Upon a majority vote of this group and the recommendation of the district mission board and the Director of the appropriate ministries council, a mission may be recognized by the Executive Board of General Conference. A recognized mission shall have the privileges and responsibilities afforded by General Conference, including elder and the minimum number of lay credentials granted to a church and the full support of district and denominational ministries. A mission shall follow the guidelines established by the appropriate ministries council.

Article 3. Church. A class or mission may become a church, with all privileges and responsibilities afforded by the General Conference, at such point as it has sufficient members and is able to assume responsibility for its own financial obligations in the estimation of the district conference and the appropriate ministries council. A class or mission may be recognized as a church by the General Conference upon a majority vote of the members of the class or mission and upon recommendation of the district conference and the appropriate ministries council.

Article 4. Class. Under special circumstances, a class may be formed by an individual, a group of individuals, or a church for the purpose of fellowship and association with The Brethren Church. A class shall be under the supervision of a church or district mission board. By common consent of those involved in the class, it may be recognized by the Executive Director and the Director of the appropriate ministries council. A recognized class shall have no delegate status in the General Conference but may operate under the corporate auspices of The Brethren 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 District and General Conferences of The Brethren Church and by providing funds for the ministries set up by those conferences as decided by the conference delegates.

See *A Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church*, Chapter One, for additional information and guidance regarding the basic structure of the local church

II. Organization of a new Congregation

See *Guidelines for Brethren Classes, Missions, and Churches, The Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church, Chapter One*; and for historical reference *Our Church Guidebook, Chapter 20*.

III. Constitution and By-Laws

The Brethren Church has several models for constitutions and By-Laws. Contact National Office for samples. Also See *Guidelines for Brethren Classes, Missions, and Churches, The Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church, Chapter One*; and for historical reference *Our Church Guidebook, Chapter 21*.

IV. Discipline of Members

The New Testament Church, our divine model, is a very democratic organization. The will of the majority, honestly expressed, is its law. All transactions, thus expressed, therefore must be respected. Any member, for any cause, refusing to peacefully abide by the will of the majority, places himself in a rebellious attitude and in bad standing. One's Christianity may well be questioned, if he persists in placing his own judgment above the will of the majority in his church. No one manifesting such a rebellious spirit should ever be given a Church letter. "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 majority 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. They will, if there is any desire to do right, so do.

Let all cases of this nature, as well as those immoral cases that sometimes unfortunately arise, be committed by a vote of the congregation to the Official Board for adjustment. It would be better to commit to the same body the work of revising, or keeping revised, the membership list. Paul's advice to the Ephesian Elders would warrant such a procedure. (Acts 20:28-31.)

See *Our Church Guidebook, Chapter 21*, and *The Brethren Church Manual of Pastoral and Congregational Procedures 2003 Edition*, especially the section entitled "Concept of Membership in the Brethren Church".

BAPTISM

(Note.—The minister and the candidate for baptism, with others, having assembled at the proper place for the administration of this Holy Ordinance, the following Order of Service may be observed. The minister may use the following suggestions as the basis for his remarks or he may use Scriptural materials of his 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:

Our Lord Jesus Christ when yet among His apostles on earth commanded them saying, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and to, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:9, 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.

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 personal Savior?

(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. (Further counseling and instruction should be given to candidates to prepare them for baptism and church membership.)

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, at a suitable time and preferably at a regular service of the Church, candidates for membership in the Church should be received by confirmation. *(In many churches this is now done immediately following baptism, either during the same service after the candidates have had opportunity to change clothing, or while still in the baptistery – ed.)*)

Let those to be confirmed come forward and after proper instructions let them kneel in prayer. Then, while kneeling, let the Minister lay his 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: I Thessalonians 5:23, 24, 28; I Peter 5: 10; Hebrews 13:20, 21.)

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

THE CONCEPT OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE BRETHREN CHURCH

(Note: This is included in this revision of the handbook since it includes a new service for the reception of members – ed.)

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 I 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.

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.

Two forms of discipline that 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 discipline 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.

As intimated above, it should be a set policy in the church that no one is removed from the membership rolls 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.

Basis for National Apportionment

This conference affirms basing national apportionments partially on membership. One of the reasons churches began to take a serious look at their membership rolls was because apportionments became linked to membership. We may cringe at the thought that finances

are the goad to taking membership seriously, but the alternative, going back to the status quo with its undisciplined membership, certainly is worse. For consistency, however, all apportionments should be based on one factor. This should not be membership alone because of the continuing discrepancy in the way churches define membership. We affirm the Church Growth Index, the sum of membership, average Sunday School attendance, and average worship attendance divided by three, as the best factor. In adopting a switch to the Church Growth Index as the basis for all apportionments, the actual revenues generated should be the same as under the former method -- what is referred to as "revenue neutral."

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 role 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.

Membership Promises (This replaces "Reception of Members" of The Brethren Pastor's Handbook)

(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 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.

The original Reception of Members section of the Handbook follows ...

RECEPTION OF MEMBERS

Membership in the Church is a holy and sacred privilege and the Minister should do his utmost to impress those received into the fellowship of the Church with the solemnity as well as the joy of the occasion. When at any service of the Church there are those to be received into the fellowship of the Church, use and adapt the following order as a guide to your procedure.

Order of Receiving Members

1. Let the person or persons to be received come forward at the Minister's invitation.
2. If any are to be confirmed proceed as indicated under Form of Service for Confirmation. Make it deeply impressive and as spiritual as possible.
3. If there are any to be received by letter, let such letters of membership be read. After the reading of all letters those who are presenting themselves for membership by letter should answer the following questions. Let the Minister ask each one separately, and let each one reply in the affirmative. The Minister asks:

In presenting yourself for membership in this Church do you promise

- To work for the up building of the Church?
 - To help sustain the worship and ministry of this congregation?
 - To support the program and ministry of the Church with your prayers, your time, your talents, and your money?
- (Each one should answer, "I do")

4. If there are any to be received by reconsecration or statement of faith, that is, any who have been baptized but for some reason may not now be holding membership in any church, let the Minister so state to the congregation and then let each one to be received in this wise answer the following questions. Let each one be asked separately and let each one answer in the affirmative. The Minister asks:

(1) Do you now present yourself to be united with this Church in fellowship and service? (Answer, I do.)

(2) Have you been baptized by (a Triune) immersion and have you been confirmed? (I have been so baptized and confirmed.)

(3) Do you hereby renew your covenant with your Lord in harmony with His will and do you pledge henceforth to live in loving and faithful obedience to His Word?

Do you promise

- To work for the up building of the Church?
- To help sustain the worship and ministry of this congregation?

—To support the program and ministry of the Church with your prayers, your time, your talents, and your money?
(Answer, “I do”)

5. Let all the members of the congregation now stand with those to be received and let the minister ask the following question:

Do you the members of the _____ Brethren Church enter into solemn covenant with this person (these persons) being received as a member (as members), and do you promise him (her/them) your love, your help, and your prayers?

(If so, answer, “We do by the grace of God.”)

6. Then shall the Minister give the right hand of fellowship to each person to be received and say: As the Minister of this church and servant of Christ I give you the right hand of fellowship and welcome you into our congregation.

7. Then shall the Minister say: Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and forevermore. Amen. (Jude 24, 25.)

Or the Minister may say: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20, 21.)

Suitable closing for the service at the Minister’s discretion.

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.

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

For the Eucharistic Emblems Unleavened Bread and the pure Fruit of the Vine should be provided. The latter is the unfermented grape juice. The Bread may be baked as follows: Five cups of flour; $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsalted butter; enough cream and milk, or whole milk, to make of the consistency of pastry. Roll out to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thickness, mark out in strips one inch wide and bake in a slow oven until cream-colored and crisp. Other recipes are available in *Our Church Guidebook*.

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; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” He pronounced His blessing upon the act when He said, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye 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. Let him 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 I 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 I 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 Brake 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 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 ye 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 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 (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 (I Samuel 10:1-10). David experienced much the same call, when again Samuel, directed by God anointed him to be king (I 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:
- a. He speaks of the necessity of confessing our faults.
 - b. 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.
 - c. He speaks, further, of the assurance of the forgiveness of sin.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 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 any druggist (pharmacy) for this purpose, and he will be happy to add a drop or two of some fragrance into the oil, if desired. 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 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 two separate documents.

The Brethren Church Manual of Commissioning, Licensing, and 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. Copies of this document should be maintained by all congregations and by all pastors. They are available in print or electronic format from the District Boards of Oversight, Brethren Church National Office, or the National Association of Brethren Church Elders.

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. Again, copies of this document should be maintained by all congregations and by all pastors. They are available in print or electronic format from the District Boards of Oversight, Brethren Church National Office, or the National Association of Brethren Church Elders.

ORDINATION SERVICE OF AN ELDER

(Note.—It is always necessary to have all the requirements of the local church, the district, and the National Ordination Council met before announcement of an ordination service is made. An ordination requires at least two elders to officiate. The District Supervising Elder, or equivalent office in a respective district, 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 District Ministerial Examining Board for his examination be read. Then have read the communication from the Examining Board 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; I Tim. 3:1-6; II 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 (District Name) District 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 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 altar (or worship center or Communion table) ready to take his 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 (Sacraments), 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?

Wife: 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 in this ministry now entrusted to him, so far as God gives you grace and strength?

Wife: God being my helper, I will.

5. After the foregoing vows have satisfactorily been declared, let the minister say: Dear brother, 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 spouse (if the candidate is married) now kneel facing the altar (worship center or Communion Table), 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(he) 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 wife 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 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

(Note.—It is always necessary to have all the requirements of the local church, the district, and the National Ordination Council met before announcement of an ordination service is made. An ordination requires at least two elders to officiate. The District Supervising Elder, or equivalent office in a respective district, 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 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 District Ministerial Examining Board for his examination be read. Then have read the communication from the examining Board which authorizes the licensing.

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; I Tim. 3:1-6; II 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 Ministerial Examining Board of the District, 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 altar (or center of worship, or Communion Table) for his consecration).

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 all-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 (Sacraments), 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 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 District Ministerial Examining Board, 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 OF DEACONS AND DEACONESSSES

(Note: The process of calling Deacons and Deaconesses differs from church to church. These directions from the original Handbook serve as a guide only. 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*. – ed.)

1. The choosing of Deacons and Deaconesses for this congregation shall be by a two-fold course of action. The first shall be a calling for candidacy, the second for election.

2. Request to the Church for additional Deacons and or Deaconesses may come from the Pastor, the Council of Deacons, the Official Board, or a member of the congregation at a quarterly business meeting. If the request comes from joint action of the Pastor and Council of Deacons in form of a recommendation, it may be considered at once. If request comes from any of the other sources, it must be referred to the Pastor and Council of Deacons for review and recommendations to the next quarterly meeting. If the Pastor and Council report favorably, they must specify the number desired. The congregation will consider the matter and submit it to a vote. A majority vote will prevail. If the recommendation is approved by the congregation, it must set a date for the calling and instruct the secretary to mail a notice of same to every family of the congregation at least fifteen (15) days prior to the meeting.

After decision is made by the congregation to call additional members to the Diaconate, the Pastor shall instruct the congregation on the qualifications for the office. He may do so by sermon, teaching session, or literature distribution.

3. The Call.

The call to Deaconship may be extended to husband and wife for Deacon and Deaconess. The voting shall be by secret ballot, each ballot naming as many husband and wife couples, or single men or women candidates, as specified for the call. The balloting shall continue until the required number shall 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 tally, and the highest, if polling a majority, until the required number is called.

The Deacon Council shall serve as tellers. They shall announce no names or tallies during the five secret ballots unless an election is declared, then only the names. At no time may the tally of any vote be revealed. The ballots shall be destroyed and the tallies remain a secret.

When those called are declared by the tellers, the congregation shall set the date for the election and order a notice of same by mail to the membership, not less than fifteen (15) days prior to the election.

4. The Election.

After a call to the Deaconship according to Sect. 3, the Council of Deacons shall counsel with the candidates relative to the office and their willingness to serve.

Election after call to the Deaconship is by ballot with a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) affirmative vote required. When there are more nominees than the number to be chosen, and no candidates receive a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote on the first ballot, the individual or couple receiving the fewest will be dropped. The voting shall continue according to this procedure until the desired number of Deacons and Deaconesses are chosen.

5. After the required number of Deacons and Deaconesses have been elected to the office, the Pastor and Council of Deacons shall make arrangements for the Ordination Service. It is considered good order and advisable to invite a member of the District Board of Oversight, or a neighboring pastor to assist in the ordination.

ORDINATION SERVICE OF A DEACON OR DEACONESS

(Note. — Instructions to the Minister, —Deacons should be elected in accordance with the order of the local congregation and the directions of the District Conference to which the Church belongs. At a suitable time they should be ordained. The following order may be readily adapted to the occasion. Deacons may be ordained by the Pastor (if he be an ordained Elder). He should be assisted by another Elder or preferably by the Supervising Elder of his Church, who should be invited to be present.

The Order of Ordination

1. There shall 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. If the District Conference authorized the same let that authorization be read.

3. Then I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6 may be read. (If a sister is to be ordained as a deaconess, 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:

(1) Do you believe that the New Testament is an all-sufficient Rule of faith and practice in the Church? (Answer, I do.)

(2) Do you willingly accept the office of a deacon (or deaconess) to which the Church has called you, and will you by the grace of God faithfully discharge the duties of this office?

(3) 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? (Or deaconess.) Will you do your utmost to serve well as a deacon, that you may gain for yourself a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus? (Answer, I do.)

5. After these questions have been satisfactorily answered by each one to be ordained the minister may say: Dear brother (or brothers or sister), 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 thee by this thy servant now. Take this life and consecrate it to thy service and to the doing of thy will. May his (or her) life be wholly thine to be used to thy glory and the up building of the Church. May the Holy Spirit abide with and dwell in the heart of this, thy 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 thee apart to the holy office of deacon (or deaconess) 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 thou authority in the Church as a deacon (or deaconess) 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 (deaconess) 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 it 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 it grows to suitable age, to an acceptance of Christ as its Savior 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 passeth 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

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 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 religion, in Church and in Sunday school. And will you seek to bring this child, when it 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 Thee for this service of Dedication, and pray Thy blessing upon these parents and upon this child (these children). May this father and mother (these parents) inspired and led by Thy loving

Spirit, be enabled to so train and teach this little one (these little ones) that he (she, or they) shall grow as did the Christ child—"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 worketh all in all.” You have been called, because of your gifts for teaching, into the ministry of this congregation. “Ye are my witnesses,” saith the Lord, “and my servants whom I have chosen that ye may know and believe me.” And again the Word declares “And these words which I command thee this day shall be upon thy heart.” And once more we find God giving instructions unto His people that the words which convey His wish and will for His people they shall teach unto their children. It is because of our desire that these words shall also be taught unto 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, “Thou shalt teach them (His commandments) unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” The work of the Sunday School cannot succeed without 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 thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

Unison Prayer: (Repeated by workers and congregation)

Almighty God, as workers of thine, we come to thee in humility, and conscious of our lack of wisdom, asking that thou wilt grant unto us of thy wisdom so that the service we have pledged thee may show forth thy praise and eventuate in Christian character in those to whom our service is given and in praise to thy holy name. 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 passeth 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 diversities of gifts hut one Spirit and difference of administration but one Lord, and diversities of operation, but one and the same God that worketh all in all.” 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: I Corinthians 3:9-11

“For we are laborers together with God: Ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is 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 “build this church”), 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 Thee for faithful forefathers who possessed a hunger for the nourishment of the Word: for the blessing of inheriting a living faith which feeds and grows on Scriptural inquiry.

CONGREGATION: We thank Thee 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 Thy 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 kingdoms 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 salvation and blessing of men. 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 cometh 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 liveth 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 sacraments,

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 men; 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, consecrate ourselves anew to the worship of God in spirit and in truth, and to the service of our fellow men 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 solemnizes. Several factors will contribute to his 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, family life and related subjects.

Although the minister should not be expected to "have all the answers," he 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 clergyman from another church or another denomination. Ministers can learn much from each other.

Marriage Laws

Laws concerning marriage vary according to each state. Therefore, a check with the couple and the Probate Court in each community is necessary before planning a wedding. Seek answers to such questions as these:

1) Is the clergyman required to present his credentials and register with the court in the county where the marriage is to take place!

(2) Have the parents or guardians given consent, if the parties are not of legal age? What are the legal ages?

(3) Are the parties related in any way?

(4) Are there any hindrances by a previous marriage (divorce) which have not been dissolved for reasons approved by God's Word?

(5) Has the couple met (or plan to meet) all the requirements of the court—age, race, residency, blood tests, license, waiting period, etc.?

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

In addition to the marriage license issued by the court, present the couple with an appropriate marriage certificate.

Premarital Guidance

The ordained minister (may) possess a state license authorizing him to officiate at wedding ceremonies. The rehearsal may take one hour and the ceremony fifteen minutes—plus some cheerful conversation over punch and cake at the reception. When he pronounces the right words, legal requirements are fulfilled.

But because of the sacredness, the seriousness, and the solemnity of marriage, a conscientious pastor is concerned about much more than properly stepped processions, eloquently repeated vows and cleanly cut cake. Too much is at stake to mass produce matrimony.

Marriage is a relationship, originating in the mind of God when He created two different sexes, which unites a man and a woman for purposes of companionship, sexual expression, procreation, and fulfillment of life's purposes before God and among their fellow human beings. It is potentially the best, most-purposeful experience or the worst, most-destructive experience two people can know.

Therefore, the minister has an obligation before God and the state government (both of whom “vest him with authority”) to use every means available to equip the couple for many years of happy, purposeful, and rewarding married life.

Consult a reliable premarital counseling guide. One that includes helpful suggestions for the minister in the areas of announced engagements, planning a wedding worship service, worship folders and music, discussion topics during a minimum of three to five premarital conferences (such as the meaning of Christian marriage, literature for the couple, premarital chastity, self-concepts, arguments with a mate, religious beliefs, sex and parenthood, family backgrounds, goals, finances, the honeymoon, etc).

The minister should inform his congregation that couples must contact him 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 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 or mimeographed wedding bulletin is appropriate. Whether commercially prepared with attractive cover designs or mimeographed, 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 her 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 altar, 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 these coming parts of the service.

The minister will benefit from compiling ideas and writing his 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 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 saith, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him."

Our Lord Jesus Christ saith: "Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh'? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

The Apostle Paul, speaking by the Holy Ghost, saith: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

The Apostle Paul also writes: "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful;

it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things. Love never ends. . . . So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love,”

And thus saith the Lord in a Psalm:

“Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord, that walketh in His *ways*. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands. Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children and peace upon Israel.”

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 him now to make it known, or ever after to hold his 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), wilt thou have this woman to be thy wife, and wilt thou pledge thy troth 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), wilt thou have this man to be thy husband, and wilt thou pledge thy troth 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 giveth 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 thee (W), to be my wedded wife; and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be thy 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 thee (H) to be my wedded husband; and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be thy 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 Thy peace, and continue in Thy favor, unto their life's end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Groom repeats after minister) This ring I give thee, 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 Thy peace, and continue in Thy favor, unto their life's end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Bride repeats after minister) This ring I give thee, in token and pledge, of our constant faith, and abiding love.

Pronouncement as Husband and Wife: By the authority committed unto 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 hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

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, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. O thou in whom we live and move and have our being, who art acquainted with all our ways and compasses our path, we invite thy presence with us, gathered here in the name of thy 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 man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. And God said it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an helpmeet for him."

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord. She will do

him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one.”

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it and present it to himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

“Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

‘Be ye followers of God as dear children and walk in love.’”

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 Ordinance 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 Thy peace, and continue in Thy 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.

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

This couple know that when they have reached a certain stage in their development and efficiency as partners, lovers, and homemakers, there will emerge a natural craving for the fulfillment of their love in children. They believe that the conception of a child at the height of love, and caring for it until it is born and afterward can be the ultimate in creativity on the human plane.

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 I 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.

Postmarital 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 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 as far as he has, 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, his 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, become "one," experimenting with routines, learning to be separated at times, sharing responsibilities, 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 their 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: "As much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." 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. But the 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 skill to be helpful to the sick. He must 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 the pastor should be ready to comply with upon request. He should always have oil for anointing on hand and have in mind the names of Deacons, or Elders, who might be available to assist him in the service. He should be thoroughly conversant with the Word of God as found in James 5:14-18 and he should seek to keep the service brief, yet impressive, by reflecting his own 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)

PRE-DEATH MINISTRY

Ministry to the terminally ill must always be a positive ministry. If the person is a Christian, speak encouragement that his faith brings. Read scripture appropriate to the circumstance (23rd Psalm, 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 must not only seek to bring comfort, but also he must be concerned for the person's spiritual welfare, if the patient has not been told he is dying, or does not sense it, the pastor should consult the doctor to ascertain the reasons and to explain his 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 he 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.

POST- DEATH MINISTRY

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 determines how much help he can bring in time of grief crises. Usually because he can be more objective than relatives and friends, the pastor can communicate the concern of the God whom he serves, the Church he represents, and the community in which he lives and works. He can, by his 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.

The pastor should not treat casually, or in a remote formal manner, this ministry. He has a wonderful opportunity to engage the personalities of the sorrowing family in the constructive work of mourning, and he is guilty of professional negligence if he fails to do wisely and well what he is called upon to do.

A pastor must bring comfort, maintain contact, help the person to deal wisely with his problems, to help him to face the reality of his situation. The pastor must exercise a "support ministry" yet he must also be careful of two things: (1) Failure to lead the person to gradually assume more and more responsibility on his own: (2) Too rapid a withdrawal of the support ministry. Great wisdom and much prayer must be exercised in every and all crises ministries.

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Some Basic Instructions

The burial of the dead calls for the most sympathetic and spiritual service the minister can render his people. As soon as the minister learns of the death of one of his members he should pay a visit to the home. He makes himself available to the family in carrying out their wishes. He makes suggestions only when asked. It is not necessary that he accompany the family to the mortuary when choices of services are to be made. If the family invites him to be with them at this time, then he should go, but only when invited.

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

If a minister is known in the community of morticians as a man of sympathy, of love and conducts his memorial services in a short, precise and dignified way, he 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. Many times such services means a new family for the church. But, the minister must earn this respect.

There are many books and helps on the market for the minister as he conducts his memorial services. The morticians can also supply helps, one of which is a little book entitled: "A Service Book" which can be and is of great help to the minister. A minister should have such helps in his library.

If a minister is called upon to conduct many memorial services during the course of the year, there is the danger of his 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 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 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 mortician should know what the order of service will be. Always, the service must 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 this day, very few obituaries are read at the beginning of the service. The minister should always mention the name of the deceased in some way during his message. This is especially true if the deceased is a faithful Christian and member of the minister's congregation. (Note: this appears to be a regional preference, with some parts of the country still expecting an obituary to be read –ed.)

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.

The minister must always keep in mind that he is a servant of God, therefore, he must conduct himself as such in the planning and conducting of memorial services for the deceased.

COMMITTALS FOR FUNERAL OCCASIONS

Forasmuch as it hath 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 he changed and made like unto His own glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

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 that sitteth 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.

It is written, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." 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 hath 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.

Our Heavenly Father: In thine infinite wisdom thou hast seen fit to call back to Thyself 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.

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; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." 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.

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 hath 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 whence 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.

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 thy keeping; praying Thee that Thou wilt deal graciously and mercifully with each of us, until we too come to Thee in Glory, through riches of grace in Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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, "What man is he that shall live and not see death; that shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?"

Also the praying Hezekiah said, "For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate."
But the prophet, Hosea, reports God's promise, "I will ransom thee from death: O Death where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?"

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." 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. Because Christ said, "I am the life, he that believeth in Me, though he die, yet shall he live." We have confidence, and 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 of men shall know us no more. We have come to that day for this, our friend, whose days were completed and the book of his life closed. Our hands are unable to minister further than this: that we now commit his body to the quiet of its resting place beneath the caresses of nature. The winds and the birds may mark the couch that man may forget, and only he who stops to meditate on the brevity of life will think to prepare himself for the great and inevitable day.