

COMMISSIONING OF A PASTOR

(Approved in its present form by the July 2013 Assembly Standing Committee)

NOTES

- 1 This service is to be used when a candidate has completed the requirements of the Ministerial Education Commission, when the presbytery is satisfied as to the candidate's readiness for commissioning, and when the congregation, faith community or other appropriate body affirms that it will accept the candidate as a pastor.
- 2 This service is a service of the presbytery which has oversight of the pastor. It should be conducted at a time and place determined by the presbytery, in the presence of members of the presbytery, the congregation with which the pastor will be associated and representatives of those among whom s/he will serve. Normally the service will take place in one of the churches of the presbytery. Where a pastor has been appointed by a synod or the Assembly, consultation between that council and the presbytery should take place in the preparation of the service.
- 3 The chairperson of the presbytery, or another of its members appointed by the presbytery, shall preside at the service and shall, at least, lead those sections noted for the chairperson. If holy communion is celebrated, the presbytery shall appoint an ordained minister to preside. Others may be invited by the presbytery to lead other parts of the service.
- 4 The Service of the Lord's Day is an appropriate form for this service of Commissioning, which should follow the Preaching of the Word and the Affirmation of Faith.
- 5 The presbytery appoints those who are to take part in the laying on of hands. This will include members of the presbytery and may also include members of the congregation with which the pastor is associated.
- 6 Before the service commences, the candidate may be escorted to a front pew or other convenient place where s/he may be joined by family and friends.
- 7 Some aspects of this service may be well expressed through the customs, symbolic actions or words of a particular culture or language group. Care must be taken that these acts reflect the meaning of the service as closely as possible, e.g., by replacing the Aaronic Blessing with a Christian blessing from a particular tradition (e.g., Indigenous).
- 8 The Scripture readings used may be drawn from the lectionary readings for the day, readings appropriate to the particular area of ministry in which the pastor will serve, or a selection from the following:

FIRST READING

Exodus 33:12-17
Isaiah 6:1-8
Isaiah 43:8-13
Isaiah 55:6-11
Isaiah 61:1-3

PSALM

19:7-14
23
100

SECOND READING

Romans 12:1-13
1 Corinthians 3:10-17
2 Corinthians 5:14-20
Philippians 2:1-11

GOSPEL

Matthew 28:16-20
Mark 10:28-35
Luke 22:14-30
John 10:11-18
John 13:12-20
John 15:1-11
John 21:15-19

- 9** If liturgical colours are used, the colour for the Commissioning of a Pastor should be red.

Commissioning of a Pastor

1 SENTENCES

In Jesus Christ we are children of God through faith.
All who are baptised into Christ are clothed with Christ.

There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for we are all one in Christ.

Based on Galatians 3:26-28

**Claimed by God in baptism,
we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit
that we may live as witnesses to Jesus Christ,
share his ministry in the world and grow to maturity,
awaiting with hope the day of our Lord Jesus.**

A hymn or song may be sung at this point.

2 PRESENTATION

The chairperson of the presbytery says:

Sisters and brothers,
the Church is God's covenant people,
the Body of Christ
and dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism into Christ's Body initiates people
into Christ's life and mission in the world.

Through baptism we are united in a communion
of love, service, suffering and joy,
in one family of the Father of all in heaven and earth,
and in the power of the one Spirit.

We thank God that the one Spirit
has endowed the members of Christ's Church
with a diversity of gifts.

**There is no gift
without its corresponding service,
for all ministries have a part
in the ministry of Christ.**

The Uniting Church in Australia affirms
that every member of the Church
is engaged to confess
the faith of Christ crucified
and to be his faithful servant.

It seeks to encourage people
to discover and develop the gifts
which God's Spirit has given them.

The Presbytery of ...
has discerned God's call to NNN
for the ministry of pastor in ...

In the Uniting Church, the ministry of pastor may include
teaching the Church's beliefs and practices;
pastoral oversight;
leadership of worship;
evangelism and service beyond a gathered congregation.

The Presbytery of ... has determined that the pastor in this area will.....

Here the range of ministry tasks agreed by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation, faith community or other appropriate body will be described.

The secretary of the presbytery invites the person to be commissioned to stand before the chairperson and says:

N, I present NNN
for commissioning as a pastor while serving in

The secretary gives a brief 'narration of steps' which shall include reference to:
– the person's acceptance as a candidate by the presbytery
– the completion of educational and other requirements with respect to commissioning as a pastor
– ministry already exercised in the community

The person to be commissioned may make a brief statement concerning her/his faith and call to this ministry.

3 THE QUESTIONS

The chairperson says:

N, we rejoice that you have come today
declaring your willingness
to participate in Christ's ministry
in this particular way.

In serving as a pastor in the Uniting Church
you are reaffirming your baptism,
declaring your allegiance to the crucified and risen Lord
and seeking to be obedient to God's will.
And so I ask you now:

N,
do you confess Jesus Christ as Lord?

I do.

Do you believe that you are called by God

through the Church to this ministry?

I do.

Do you receive the witness to Christ
in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments;
and do you undertake to proclaim from these,
the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed?

I do.

Will you seek to live and work within the faith and unity
of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church
as described in the Basis of Union?

I will.

In your life and work within the Uniting Church
will you be guided by its Basis of Union,
and will you submit yourself to the Church's discipline
and the oversight of the Presbytery of?

I will.

Do you affirm and commit yourself to the covenant made between the Uniting Aboriginal and
Islander Christian Congress and the Uniting Church and accept the obligation to serve both First
and Second peoples?

I do.

Will you endeavour to show love and compassion in the name of Christ
to all among whom you serve?

I will.

The people stand.
The chairperson says:

Will you accept N
as a pastor in.....?

We will.

Will you encourage her/him in love
and support her/him in this ministry,
serving with her/him the one Lord Jesus Christ?

We will.

May God give you strength to fulfil these promises;
and to God be the glory
in the Church and in Christ Jesus
from generation to generation for ever. **Amen.**

4 ACT OF COMMISSIONING

Those appointed by the presbytery to join in the laying on of hands come forward.
The chairperson says:

Let us pray in silence for N,
before we commission her/him
as a pastor while serving in

The candidate kneels.

After a time of silence hands are laid on the head of the candidate and the chairperson continues:

By the Holy Spirit, Lord,
strengthen this your servant,
and set her/his heart on fire with love for you.
Increase in her/him your gifts of grace:
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and wonder in your presence,
the spirit of joy and delight in your service,
now and for ever.

Based on Isaiah 11:2

The people respond

Amen.

The Aaronic Blessing may be said or sung by the people (Together in Song, 776; Australian Hymn Book, 572),
or another blessing may be used.

**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.**

Numbers 6:24-26

5 DECLARATION

The pastor stands and faces the people.
The chairperson says:

In the name of Jesus Christ
and by the authority of the Presbytery of.....,
we declare that NNN
is commissioned as a pastor
in the Uniting Church in Australia
while serving in.....

The declaration may be followed by the singing of a doxology, e.g., *Together in Song* 768-775.

The newly-commissioned pastor is greeted by members of the presbytery, congregation, ecumenical guests and others as appropriate. One of these may be asked to extend words of welcome.

The service continues from *Uniting in Worship 2*, p. 160 (13 OFFERING, SLD-1) or p. 208 (14 PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE, SLD-2).

Prayers of the People may include intercessions for the pastor and her/his family, the particular area of ministry and the needs of the church and the world.

If the presbytery so determines, the service may include a celebration of holy communion at which an ordained minister appointed by the presbytery shall preside.