

**A SERVICE OF WORSHIP ON THE OCCASION OF
VACATING A CHURCH BUILDING
[INCLUDING THE DISSOLUTION OF THE CONGREGATION]**

When a congregation moves from a former building into a new place for worship, or when there is a dissolution of a church, a service may recall the memories and gifts of God that, for a time, have been attached to a particular building. God's promised presence is not bound by space or time. God's promise is realized in particular ways, however, within our bounded existence. While sorrow may accompany the departure from a cherished building, the occasion calls for thanksgiving for God's gracious gifts, past, present, and future.

Appropriate portions of the service should be conducted by the authority of the presbytery with the moderator or moderator's representative presiding. This liturgy is intended as a resource; for congregations and presbyteries, and should be adapted to the normal worship patterns of the congregation.

It is appropriate for elders, deacons, and others within the congregation to share in the leadership of the entire service.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The moderator of the presbytery addresses the congregation:

As we gather for worship,
let us acknowledge with solemn joy
God's gift of this place,
remembering with gratitude
all who have worshiped here,
the faith professed at this font,
the gospel proclaimed from this pulpit,
the assurance received at this table.
Let us also reaffirm our faith
in our sojourning God
as this building is now transferred to other uses.
That which we have received from God
let us now return to God with thanksgiving.

CALL TO WORSHIP

GREETING

The presiding minister greets the people:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE

The Lord God says:
For as the rain and snow come down from heaven
and do not return there, but water the earth.
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

**so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. [Isaiah 55:10,11]**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
may the gifts of your Spirit be our goal and our strength,
now and always.
Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE, PSALM, OR SPIRITUAL

Among the appropriate selections are:

*Holy God, We Praise Your Name [PH 460]
Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken [PH 446]
I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art [PH 457]
All People That on Earth Do Dwell [PH 220]*

CONFESSION AND PARDON

CALL TO CONFESSION

The Proof of God's amazing love is this:
While we were sinners
Christ died for us.
Because we have faith in him,
we dare to approach God with confidence.
In faith and penitence,
let us confess our sin before God and one another.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

*KYRIE ELEISON
[PH 565, 572-574]*

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The mercy of the Lord
is from everlasting to everlasting.
I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven.
May the God of mercy,
who forgives you all your sins,
strengthen you in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit
keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

THE PEACE

Since God has forgiven us in Christ,
let us forgive one another.
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

The congregation may exchange signs of peace and reconciliation

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord, open our hearts and minds
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
that as the scriptures are read
and your Word is proclaimed,
we may hear with joy what you say to us today.
Amen.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed

HYMN

Among the appropriate selections are:

The Church's One Foundation [PH 442 or 443]

Christ is Made the Sure Foundation [PH 416 or 417]

Behold the Goodness of Our Lord [PH 241]

God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending [PH 422]

THE EUCHARIST

Communion should be celebrated in the congregation's normal manner.

*Following the Communion of the People, the moderator of presbytery, elders, deacons, and other representatives of the congregation shall gather at the table.
All may stand.*

LITANY OF PRAISE

The moderator leads the litany:

Eternal God,
whom the highest heaven cannot contain,
much less a building made by human hands,

hear our prayer.

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

we praise you, O God.

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

we praise you, O God.

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

we praise you, O God.

For your presence
whenever your Word has been proclaimed and
your sacramental gifts of bread and wine received,

we praise you, O God.
For your blessing
upon each of your children,
welcomed and nurtured here,
we praise you, O God.
For all who came
to ask your blessing in marriage,
seeking to love with your love,
we praise you, O God.
For faithful stewards
who have lived for others,
serving you by loving neighbors,
we praise you, O God.
For all who were gathered from this place,
having lived this life in faith,
who now live eternally with you,
we praise you, O God.
For the knowledge that your church
and your ministry among us
will continue today, tomorrow, and forever,
we praise you, O God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

When the congregation is being dissolved, the remaining members of the congregation may stand and be recognized.

The moderator may direct the clerk of session to transfer their membership to another congregation, releasing the official records and rolls of the church to the presbytery.

The moderator continues:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and by the authority of the Presbytery of N.,
I declare this building vacated
by the congregation of N. Church
[and the congregation dissolved].

HYMN(S)

Among the appropriate selections are:

Psalms 23 [PH 170-175]

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past [PH 210]

Lift High the Cross [PH 371]

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less [PH 379]

The moderator leads a procession from the building during the singing of a hymn(s). Furnishings, including the pulpit or lectern Bible, baptismal and communion vessels, and paraments may be removed and carried out by ministers, elders, and members of

the congregation.
All gather outside the building for the charge and blessing.
The moderator continues:

CHARGE

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

BLESSING

The presiding minister gives God's blessing to the congregation:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

Amen.

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