

ORDER FOR THE INDUCTION OF ELDERS

The Minister should work through the order with the candidates beforehand.

This Order should be used also in denominationally united congregations that retain the office of the ordained Elder but change the title 'Elder' to 'Church Councillor'. The terms 'Church Council', 'Church Council Secretary' and 'Church Councillor(s)' should then be substituted respectively for 'Session', 'Session Clerk' and 'Elder(s)' wherever these occur in the Order. The Declaration of Standards, to the Vow and any other denominational wording then also need to be changed to accord with the united status of the congregation.

The Induction of Elders takes place during public worship on the Lord's Day.

The Session is constituted before the service and may associate the Elders to be inducted with it. It then adjourns for the service.

At least two lessons from Scripture should be read. If they are not the lectionary lessons, they may be chosen from the following:

[The same list of lessons as in Appendix H.]

The sermon may be a charge to the Elders to be inducted and to the congregation. It should at least refer to the role or work of Elders.

After the sermon the congregation, standing, says the Nicene Creed together as its confession of faith.

The Offering is collected while a hymn to the Holy Spirit is sung. (Alternatively the Te Deum may be sung here.) During the hymn the incumbent Elders take their places as for Holy Communion.

After the Offertory Prayer the Minister stands behind the Holy Table, facing the congregation.

The Elders to be inducted take their places in front of, and facing, the Minister.

Preamble

Brothers and sisters,
the Lord Jesus Christ, as Head of the Church calls Elders to be ordained
to govern, guide and care for God's people.
Together with the Minister the Elders thus share
in overseeing the congregation's life and work.
It is their duty to care for its members spiritually and pastorally,
arrange public worship and the celebration of the sacraments,

see that the congregation is educated in the faith,
maintain the standards of church membership,
guard the peace and unity of the Church
and promote Christian mission at home and abroad.
Elders also represent the congregation in the Church's wider
councils.

Those who rule, shepherd and serve God's people in all these ways,
should be faithful in the study of the Scripture and prayer,
live holy lives, be examples to the flock
and not neglect the poor and the needy.

Narrative

The Session Clerk (or the Minister) reads the following narrative:

This is the story of how we have arrived at this service today.

The Session of this congregation decided that it needed more Elders.
It announced to the congregation how many and called for
nominations.

Session considered all the nominations,
announced to the congregation all those it sustained
and called for any objections to the doctrine or character of the
nominees.

It then announced to the congregation the nominations it approved,
and the congregation duly elected the following members:
[full names, in alphabetical order].

All (these men and women) have been previously ordained as Elders
of the Church.

Session has therefore appointed today for their induction in this
congregation.

We proceed to the induction now.

Declaration of Standards

Listen then to the Church's Declaration of its Standards.

*The Session Clerk (or the Minister) reads the Declaration of Standards in
the UPCS A:*

[Text as in Appendix E above.]

Vow

Facing those to be inducted as Elders, the Minister says:

Beloved in the Lord,
do you accept your election to the office of Elder in this

congregation,
and do you promise to discharge all its duties faithfully?

Each replies separately:

I do.

You took the prescribed Vow when you were ordained,
but for us to confer authority on you for this office in this place,
the Church requires you, in response to its Declaration of Standards,
to reaffirm this Vow before God and this congregation.

The Minister hands a copy of the Vow to each Elder who is to be inducted.

They turn and face the congregation.

Either separately or all together they read the Vow, audibly and at a deliberate pace.

**I, [full name], own and confess God as my Father,
Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord,
and the Holy Spirit as my Helper.**

**As far as I know my own heart,
I am moved to accept the office and ministry
of an Elder in this congregation
by zeal for the glory of God,
love for the Lord Jesus Christ,
the call of the Holy Spirit,
the commission to witness to the coming of God's kingdom on earth
and a desire for the salvation of all people.**

**I accept the Word of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New
Testaments
as the final rule of faith and life.**

**I accept as subordinate standards of the faith
the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.**

**I accept the substance of the faith expressed in
the Confession of Faith
of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa,
and in the Declaration of Faith for the Church in Southern Africa.**

**I acknowledge the doctrine and form of government
of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
to accord with Scripture.**

**I promise to be loyal to this Church,
to accept its authority,**

**to abide by its laws and discipline,
and to encourage other members to do the same.
I will serve as commissioned in its ruling councils
and seek its unity and peace.**

**With God's help I undertake to be regular in worship,
faithful in the study of Scripture and in prayer,
and holy in my own life,
so that I set an example to all.**

**I will share with diligence and compassion
in the spiritual oversight and discipline
that the Session exercises in the congregation
and serve the people entrusted to my care faithfully,
so that God may use me to build up the Body of Christ.**

**In all these things I will seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ,
the good Shepherd who loves and cares for his flock.**

*Each Elder to be inducted then signs a copy of the Vow on the Table.
After all have signed, they face the Minister again.*

May God accept your reaffirmation of this Vow
and grant you grace and power to keep it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Alternatively, if any of the Elders to be inducted are not able to read easily, they all face the Minister, who puts the Vow to them in the form of the following questions.

Each Elder then answers separately and audibly, as the Minister indicates by saying the forename of each after the first question and thereafter looking at each:

You took the prescribed Vow, or answered the prescribed questions,
when you were ordained,
but for us to confer authority on you for this office in this place,
the Church requires you, in response to its Declaration of Standards,
to reaffirm now before God and this congregation,
what you promised then:

Do you own and confess God as your Father,
Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord,
and the Holy Spirit as your Helper?

I do.

As far as you know your own heart,
do you accept the office and ministry of an Elder in this congregation

out of zeal for the glory of God,
love for the Lord Jesus Christ,
the call of the Holy Spirit,
the call to witness to the coming of God's kingdom on earth
and a desire for the salvation of all people?

I do.

Do you accept the Word of God
in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
as the final rule of faith and life?

I do.

Do you accept as subordinate standards of the faith
the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds?
Do you accept the substance of the faith expressed
in the Confession of Faith of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in
Southern Africa,
and in the Declaration of Faith for the Church in Southern Africa?

I do.

Do you acknowledge the doctrine and form of government
of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
to accord with Scripture?

I do.

Do you promise to be loyal to this Church,
to accept its authority,
to abide by its laws and discipline,
and to encourage other members to do the same?

I do.

Will you serve as commissioned in its ruling councils
and seek its unity and peace?

I will.

Will you be regular in worship and, with God's help,
be faithful in the study of Scripture and in prayer,
and holy in your own life,
so that you set an example to all?

I will.

Will you with diligence and compassion
share in the spiritual oversight, care and discipline
that the Session exercises in the congregation
and serve the people entrusted to your care faithfully,
so that God may use you to build up the Body of Christ?

I will.

Will you in all these things seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ,
the good Shepherd who loves and cares for his flock?

I will.

Each Elder to be inducted then signs a copy of the questions with the responses on the Table.

After all have signed, they face the Minister again.

The Lord help you faithfully to keep all that you have promised before him.

Amen.

Induction

All the Elders to be inducted stand in front of the Minister, who says:

I now ask you all:

Do you accept the office of Elder in *this* congregation,
and do you promise faithfully to discharge all the duties of an Elder in it?

I do.

Will everyone present please stand.

I now call upon all the enrolled members of this congregation of ...
Church:

please answer the four questions I will now put to you
by saying together 'We do,' if you can do so sincerely:

Do you dedicate yourselves anew to Christ
and the task of ministering to others that he lays upon us all?

We do.

Do you promise to honour these Elders whom you have elected
and to be subject to their oversight
as they and the other Elders lead and govern the congregation
together?

We do.

Do you undertake to work with them in making this congregation
one that welcomes 'all peoples and nations of every language' *Dan. 7:14*
to be members of the Body of Christ with you?

We do.

Do you undertake to work with them in our congregation's mission to
the community?

We do.

Induction Prayer

The congregation stands, and the Elders to be inducted kneel.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we praise you that through your Word and your Spirit
you have established your Church on earth,
and sustained it through the ages.

We praise you that in every generation you have called men and
women

to serve you in the Church and in the world.

We thank you for these your servants

who have responded to your call, and this congregation's call,
to take up the office and ministry of Elders in it.

Help them to search their own hearts and minds

Ps. 139:23

and acknowledge their unworthiness and need before you.

Pause for silent prayer.

Grant them true repentance

and the assurance of your forgiveness and mercy, we pray.

May your Holy Spirit give them strength and joy,

as they offer and dedicate themselves anew, to serve you in this task.

Pause for silent prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you are
the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep

John 10:11

and that you have called these your servants

who have already served as shepherds under you

to the same office in this congregation.

As you now place this flock under their care,

fan into flame the gift of your Spirit in them.

Give them a spirit of power and love and self-discipline.

So may they be faithful witnesses, unashamed to testify to you.

2 Tim. 1:6-8

Help them to watch over all the flock with care

as part of the church of God which you won with your own blood,

and to protect it from those who seek to savage it

or to entice the sheep away from the truth.

Acts 20:28-30

Give them wisdom and patience in taking counsel together,

vision and courage in leading this congregation in witnessing to the
gospel,

and love and compassion as they oversee it.

So, when you, the Chief Shepherd, appear,

may they win the crown that will never lose its glory.

1 Pet. 5:4

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Declaration of Induction

The congregation sits, and the Elders being inducted stand.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
God's anointed holy Servant
crucified, risen and exalted on high,
the King and Head of the Church,
I declare you all to be Elders now inducted into this congregation.
May the God of peace
who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great shepherd of the sheep,
by the blood of the eternal covenant,
make you complete in everything good
so that you may do his will,
working among us that which is pleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever.

Acts 4:27

Amen.

Heb. 13:20f.

The Presentation of the Elders

The newly inducted Elders stand facing the congregation, and the Minister says to the congregation:

Brothers and sisters, I present to you [names],
all now inducted as Elders in this congregation.

The Right Hand of Fellowship

In recognition of your induction we give you the right hand of fellowship.

The Minister and all the incumbent Elders give the right hand of fellowship to the newly inducted Elders and return to their seats.

Presentation of Gifts

At the Session's discretion an appropriate gift such as a Christian book may be presented to each newly inducted Elder.

The Minister then invites the newly inducted Elders take their places with the other incumbent Elders behind the Table.

Hymn

After the hymn the service proceeds with the celebration of Holy Communion or else concludes with the Commission and Benediction.

Commission

One of the following is said:

Be watchful,
stand firm in the faith,
be courageous, be strong.
Let all that you do be done in love.

1 Cor. 16:14

Or

Whatever you do, whether in word or in deed,
do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Col. 3:17

Or

See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord. *Col. 4:17*

Or

This is his command:
to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ,
and to love one another as he has commanded us.

1 Jn. 3:23

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Rom. 15:13*

Or

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace
at all times and in every way.
The Lord be with you all.

2 Th. 3:16

Or

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus
Christ.
To him be glory both now and for ever!

2 Pet. 3:18

A threefold Amen is sung.

After the service the Session is reconstituted. The Session then formally adds the names of the newly inducted Elders to the Roll of Session. The Session Clerk records this in the minutes.