

ORDER FOR A CONGREGATION TO REAFFIRM THE COVENANT

(MNQOPHISO SERVICE)

This order is for a congregation to reaffirm the covenant God seals with us at our baptism. Especially suitable times for it are at the beginning of the year or on the anniversary of a congregation's constitution or sometime during the Easter season. If it is used on Easter Sunday, the part of the Order before the main heading 'THE PEOPLE RESPOND' should be changed to focus on the theme of our Lord's Resurrection. Easter morning services should always conclude with Holy Communion.

GOD'S CALL

Entry of the Bible

The Bible is carried in, and the congregation stands. The Bible is placed on the pulpit (or the lectern).

Call to Worship

The call to worship is from the pulpit (or the lectern), the people standing.

With what shall I come before the LORD
and bow myself before God on high?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love faithfulness,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Mic. 6:6,8

THE PEOPLE'S APPROACH

The minister conducts worship from behind the Holy Table.

Greeting and Welcome

The following responses may be used:

Good morning.
Good morning.
The Lord be with you!
And also with you!

The minister welcomes all present, especially visitors.

Hymn of Praise

Prayer of Praise and Adoration

The congregation remains standing.

Lord our God, we praise you for your great majesty;
we adore you for your great grace towards us.
For you have loved us with a love that is from all eternity
and made that love known to us through Jesus Christ.
O LORD, God of Israel,
there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath,
keeping covenant with your servants
and showing faithful love to those
who walk before you with all their hearts.
All glory be to you, God our Father,
and to your Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

1 Ki.8:23

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

The congregation may stand or sit.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Ps.51:17

Or

Come, now, and let us settle the matter, says the LORD.
Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Is.1:18

Let us therefore confess our sins to God.

Lord God, you have set your will before us
and made plain the way we should take:
the way of justice and righteousness,
the way of faithfulness and mercy,
the way of obedience and love.
Forgive us for all our failure to walk in that way,
for the smallness of our faith and of our love,
for the emptiness of our worship,
for our reluctance to take up our cross and follow Jesus,
for the shallowness of our service to you,
for the weakness of our witness in the world....
Hear us and forgive us, we pray,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Assurance of Grace

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Ps. 103:8, 12

Or

Thus says the LORD,
'I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.'

Isa. 44:22

The minister continues:

To all who truly repent
And by faith in him resolve to lead a new life
Jesus says, 'Your sins are forgiven!' and 'Follow me!'

Mk. 2:5, 14

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his faithful love endures for ever!

Ps. 106:1

Hymn/Song

GOD'S WORD

Prayer for Illumination

Darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the peoples.
But let your Spirit so empower your Word, Lord,
that your light may shine upon us
and lighten our darkness.
May we see the glory of your gospel
and learn to keep your will
and walk in your way.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Scripture Lessons

Listen as God speaks to us in the words of Holy Scripture.

At least three lessons are read, one from the Old Testament, one from the Psalms and one from the New Testament. The Psalm may be said responsively.

Suitable lessons are:

Gen.9:8-17
 Gen.15:1-19
 Gen.17:1-9
 Ex.20:1-17
 Ex.24:1-11
 Lev.26:40-45
 Deut.4:1-14
 Deut.7:6-9,11
 Deut.29:1-15
 Josh.24:1-8,14-25
 Jer.11:1-13
 Jer.31:31-34
 Ezk.34:15-30
 Ezk.37:21-28
 Hos.6:1-11
 Hos.8:1-14

Ps.25:1-15
 Ps.50:1-15
 Ps.74:9-21
 Ps.78:1-16
 Ps.89:1-16
 Ps.103:1-18
 Ps.105:1-15
 Ps.106:1-13,40-45
 Ps.111:1-10
 Ps.132:11-18

Ac.3:17-26
 Ac.7:1-8
 Rom.6:1-11
 1 Cor.11:23-32
 1 Cor.12:4-7,12-14,27
 2 Cor.3:2-11
 Gal.3:1-18
 Eph.4:1-8
 Tit.3:1-8.
 Heb.9:11-15,27f
 Heb.12:12-25
 1 Pet.3:17-22

Matt.5:13-20
 Matt.26:17-29
 Mk.14:12-25
 Lk.1:67-79
 Lk.22:7-23
 Jn.3:1-11
 Jn.15:1-11,16
 Jn.21:9-19

Sermon

THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE

Confession of Faith

The Apostles' Creed (or another approved liturgical confession of faith) is said together.

Commemoration of the Covenant and our Baptism

The congregation remains standing as the minister moves to the baptismal font.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
 today we commemorate and give thanks for God's covenant with us
 and in turn renew our commitment to be faithful to him.
 God covenanted with Israel, saying,
 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.
 And you shall walk in all the way that I command you,
 that it may be well with you.'

Jer.7:23

By his death and resurrection our Lord Jesus Christ
 made a new covenant with all whom he calls to follow him.
 He promises us new and eternal life
 and calls us for our part to deny ourselves
 and live no more for ourselves but for him.

That covenant was sealed with us in our baptism.

The minister pours water into the font, visibly and audibly.

He then places his hand in the font, lifts up a handful of water and lets it splash into the font.

All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death.

We were therefore buried with him by baptism into death,
in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father,

we too might walk in newness of life

Rom.6:3f.

By baptism God claims us as his own,
incorporates us into the Body of Christ

and frees us from the tyranny of sin, the law and the devil.

Even though we may be unable to remember our own baptism,
its effects extend throughout our lives:

the promise God made us in our baptism endures for ever.

The minister makes the sign of the cross (or else extends his/her hands as in blessing) over the people and says:

Remember, you have been baptized

in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice and be thankful.

God is faithful and keeps his covenant promises.

Amen.

Renewal of Commitment

The people stand or kneel.

The following three questions may be put to the congregation, which then answers together.

As we commemorate this covenant, and our baptism, I ask you:

Do you trust in the grace of God,

turn away from all sin,

and renounce evil and all its works in the world?

I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour

and pledge yourself to obey his Word

and serve him as his disciple in all you do?

I do.

Do you promise to be a faithful member of Christ's Church
and undertake to let the Holy Spirit direct your life?

I do.

The minister or someone else says:

Let us remember that our Lord calls his disciples to many different tasks.

Some are easy, some difficult,
some match our natural inclinations, some do not,
some may bring esteem, some bring reproach,
some bring blessing, some demand great sacrifice.

But whatever his call may be, he promises to walk at our side
and strengthen us with his Spirit.

Let us therefore renew our commitment to him.

Let us pray.

Lord, we thank you that you have covenanted
to be faithful to your people Israel

and to the new Israel of God that you graft onto the old stock.

We thank you that you sealed this covenant with us in our baptism.

Help us in the power of your Spirit to bind ourselves to you

who have so graciously bound yourself to us

and gladly to take on us Christ's yoke of obedience.

In his name we pray.

Amen.

We all say together:

Lord God, you have claimed me for yourself.

I am no longer my own but yours.

Put me to what you will;

rank me with whom you will;

put me to doing, put me to suffering;

let me be used for you or laid aside for you;

exalted for you or brought low for you;

let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and wholeheartedly yield to you

all I am and all I have;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Laying on of Hands

The minister may invite all who wish to receive the laying on of hands to come and kneel or stand at the font.

The minister, assisted by one or more elders if necessary, lays both hands on the head of each person in turn or, with oil prepared beforehand, traces the sign of the cross on his/her forehead and says:

Holy Father, uphold *N* by your Holy Spirit,
and increase in *him* your gifts of grace,

that he/she may serve you faithfully in the world
and witness to you with courage.

Amen.

Offering and Hymn

When all have returned to their seats, the minister says

Let us worship God with our gifts as we sing together...

The congregation sings a suitable song or hymn such as 'O Jesus, I have promised'.

Peace

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

And also with you.

The peace is exchanged.

An offertory prayer follows.

GOD'S SACRAMENT

The service continues with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, using an approved UPCS order.

GOD'S COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

Commission

Go forth into the world in peace;
Be of good courage;
Hold fast that which is good;
Render to no one evil for evil;
Strengthen the fainthearted;
Support the weak;
Help the afflicted;
Honour all people;
Love and serve the Lord,
Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the power of the Spirit, go into the world:
Serve the Lord and witness to him.

We go in the name of Christ.

Blessing

Now 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,
equip you with everything good
in order that you may do his will,
working in us that which is pleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Heb.13:2