**The Dissolution of a Congregation**

It is as important for the church to celebrate endings as it is to celebrate beginnings. The following texts are proposed for use when a congregation is to be dissolved or is to be amalgamated with another congregation when the new congregation is to worship in another place. The texts may be used also when a congregation is about to move to a new building.

The resources are for use within a regular service of Word and Holy Communion. The service will be conducted by the authority of the presbytery with the moderator of presbytery presiding.

For members of the congregation being dissolved, the occasion may be one for grief and yet the major themes will be thanksgiving for the history now coming to a close and praise for the guidance of God through the years of the congregation's life. If proceeds from the sale of property will be dedicated to new areas of mission and ministry, this should be noted and celebrated.

The Rite for the Dissolution of a Congregation will follow immediately after the Lord's Supper and will replace the post-communion prayer.

It is appropriate for the litany to be led by members of the congregation or those who have been members in the past and who have belonged to various age-groups and organizations.

There will be opportunity, just before the final declaration, for the historical records to be turned over to the presbytery or, in the case of amalgamation, the session of the new congregation.

The moderator of presbytery will announce The Declaration and will lead the Procession out of the church during the recessional hymn. Minister, elders, officers and members of the congregation will join the procession and will carry with them the pulpit Bible, the baptismal bowl or water pitcher, and the communion vessels.

Weather permitting, the people may gather outside the church for the final benediction or, if necessary, proceed to an adjacent place.

The texts which follow include a responsive **Call to Worship** for use at the beginning of the Service of Worship and **The Rite for Dissolution** which concludes the service. The rite for dissolution is outlined as follows.

A Litany of Praise

Transfer of Historical Documents

The Declaration

Recessional Hymn and Procession

Benediction

**A Call to Worship**

*The minister of the congregation or an elder may lead the people in reading responsively.*

We celebrate the promise of God,

for this promise has been true for us.

God said:

**I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;**

**your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,**

**your old shall dream dreams,**

**and your young shall see visions.** *Joel 2:28*.

We celebrate the presence of God,

for this presence has been our strength.

God said:

**I have loved you with an everlasting love;**

**therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.**

*Jer. 31:3*.

I will sing of your steadfast love, O God, forever;

**With my mouth I will proclaim**

**your faithfulness to all generations.**

Your steadfast love is established forever;

**Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.**

You said: "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,

I have sworn to my servant David:

I will establish your descendants for ever,

and build your throne for all generations." *Ps. 89:1-5a.*

**Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord.**

**A Rite for the Dissolution of a Congregation**

*The moderator of presbytery together with others who will lead, shall stand before the people. Leaders will be representative of organizations and groups through the history of the congregation. The people will stand.*

**A Litany Of Praise**

Leader: 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 praises to you,

People: **We praise you, Creator God.**

Leader: For those who came here as children to learn of you and to be received within your covenant of grace,

**People: We praise you, Creator God.**

Leader: For the young who have grown in you, and matured in you, and have been challenged with your claims,

People: **We praise you, Creator God.**

Leader: For those who have come together in marriage in this community, have rejoiced in your gift of children, and have learned to know you better in learning to love each other more truly,

People: **We praise you, Creator God.**

Leader: For those who have taught in Church School and Bible Class, and for all who have learned from one another and you,

People: **We praise you, Creator God.**

Leader: For the ministers, members of the Session and Board of Managers, musicians and choristers, and all who have given their time and talents for the work of this Church,

People: **We praise you, Creator God.**

Leader: For the knowledge that your church continues and that the work of the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church will continue through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

People**: We praise you, Creator God.**

Leader: For the grace that we retain in remembering the people,

special events both large and small,

challenges and opportunities,

joys and sorrows,

and all the common life that has been shared in this congregation,

People: **We praise you Creator God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

**Transfer Of Historical Documents**

*The Moderator shall say:*

I call upon \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the Clerk of Session of this congregation, to transfer to the Clerk of The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the Minutes of Session, The Communion Roll, The Baptismal Roll and such other records that have historical and legal value.

**The Declaration**

*The transfer having been completed, the Moderator shall say:*

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority of The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I declare that the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church is dissolved.

**Recessional Hymn And Procession Out**

*During the singing of the hymn, the procession out of the church begins, led by the moderator of presbytery, the minister, elders and other members of the congregation who will carry with them the communion vessels, the baptismal bowl or water pitcher, and the pulpit Bible. All will gather in the appointed place for the benediction.*

**Charge And Benediction**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen. Alleluia, alleluia**.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit

be with you all. **Amen.** *II Cor. 13:13.*