

**PREAMBLE TO ORDINATION, INDUCTION OF MINISTERS
AND ORDINATION AND ADMISSION OF RULING ELDERS**

(Committee on Church Doctrine report, A&P 2021, p. 292–96, 50)

These two overtures address the need to update two edicts which are prior to the service and preambles that are read before the ordination and induction (admission in case of ruling elders) during the service. As the committee undertook the work of updating the ordination preambles, it became clear that making its language current and accessible required updating some theological expressions in order to maintain theological integrity in the light of the addition of Living Faith as a subordinate standard. Making the language clear and contemporary inevitably involves some paraphrasing which increases the word count. Since Living Faith became a subordinate standard after the present preamble was written some updating of the content also seems appropriate. Note for example that the Christological focus of the original preamble was maintained but it has been placed in the context of a Trinitarian understanding. We have referenced Living Faith in endnotes where necessary. The Committee on Church Doctrine undertook a major task of clarifying the meaning of subscriptions to the subordinate standards during the early 2000s, therefore this proposed preamble is also guided by the document “Confessing the Faith Today: The Nature and Function of Subordinate Standards”. (A&P 2003, p. 247–72) For the sake of understanding the rationale behind some of the changed language we provide endnotes, referring to scripture, Living Faith and Confessing the Faith Today, to explain the mind of the committee. The committee encourages everyone to pay attention to these notes as they study this draft.

As we prepared the preamble for the ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, it became clear that its length might be a challenge to hold the interest of many. After some reflection, the committee has chosen to present the preamble for minister’s ordination and induction in two different forms: one as a regular preamble to be read out and another in a litany form to encourage congregational participation. It is the committee’s view that both forms ought to be made available.

During the discussion, a corresponding member shared a concern about a possibility of the wordings – though acceptable to the committee – causing some distress since the General Assembly will be preoccupied with the question of unity. The committee took note of that concern but felt that presenting the work was in good order based on the previous year’s report that indicated the work would be forth coming to 2021 General Assembly.

Since this interim work was distributed to the congregations, sessions and presbyteries last June, we have received two helpful responses so far. Updating the preambles requires a great deal of care, as one of the responders noted. It requires far more care than one reading. The committee has been working to improve the working copy presented as part of our interim report in 2020. As we seek the Church’s input the committee has chosen to leave the current study version as is and is now asking the church once again for more feedbacks in order to bring to the Assembly a version that will withstand the test of time, at least for a near future.

Edict for the Ordination or Induction of Minister of Word and Sacrament

The Presbytery of (name) gives notice of the upcoming service of ordination (and/or induction) of (name(s)) into the Holy ministry of Word and Sacrament. Since the necessary steps have been taken, the Presbytery of (name) has arranged for a service of ordination to take place (and/or induction) into the pastoral charge of (name) on (date) at (time) within (place). Please note that if there is any valid objection to the life and teaching of (name) that such objection should be brought to the attention of the presbytery before or at the time of the meeting of the presbytery for the service of ordination. Any objections should be based on proper grounds and should be brought to the presbytery in a spirit of respect for the dignity of the person called to be ordained. When the presbytery has assured itself that no valid objection is raised it will proceed with the service of ordination.

Signature: Clerk of the Presbytery

Preamble – Ministry of Word and Sacrament

All ministries of the church have their source in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Creator so loved all of creation¹ that God came to us in the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, God’s son, our Saviour and Lord and now sustains us by the Holy Spirit.²

The risen Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, “As the Father sent me so I send you” and he promised to be with them to the end of the age.³ This commission and promise to the disciples is an example, promise and command that

sustains all the ministries of the church. In response we submit ourselves to Jesus Christ who is our Prophet – the One who is truth – our Priest – the One who stands in our place and saves us – and our Sovereign – the One for whom we live our lives.

Through Jesus Christ, God's Word made flesh and by the Spirit of God, the church is called into being. It is given strength to do its work and sent into the world to witness to abundant life, brought by the Spirit, through God's Good News of love, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and justice. All Christians are ministers of this Good News and called to witness to it in God's creation.⁴ In response to God's loving gift of salvation, with the help of God's Spirit, we joyfully worship and praise God. In thankfulness and joy, we cannot but help to serve and glorify God in love through Christ our Mediator and the Spirit our Helper.

So that the church may live and witness effectively and constantly be renewed and strengthened, God calls and gifts people for different ministries. These include those who make solemn promises⁵ to serve by preaching God's Word, administering the sacraments, giving leadership to the church, teaching and acting in various forms of mission that serve God's reign⁶ in the world.

From the earliest times God has led the church to set aside and ordain people for the special ministry of Word and Sacrament. As a church we prayerfully discern and confirm gifts for ministry and God's call to that task in the lives of those who offer themselves for this ministry.

The profound responsibility of those called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament is to guide the church by prayerfully and respectfully engaging with the historic Confessions⁷ of the church in the light of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ – the Living Word. They know Jesus Christ through the Scriptures that bear witness to him as they are guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is bound to God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and known to us through Jesus Christ – God's Resurrected and Living Word.⁸ As Christians our deepest allegiance is to Jesus Christ. The whole of his history, from his birth, to his life, teaching, example and ministry and to his death, resurrection, ascension and reign, reveals God to us. Everything that we do, believe and teach are measured against his revelation. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the written word of God, revealing Jesus Christ. They are the measure, the canon, of all our teaching and discernment of truth.⁹ We accept they are historical documents, conditioned by the language, thought and setting of their time. As we read them in their historical context, the Living Word of God is revealed. They are the means through which Jesus Christ leads and guides the church.

As The Presbyterian Church in Canada we confess that there is one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of which we are part. We honour and respect the historically shaped tradition of the Christian church contained in its ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Reformation.

Within The Presbyterian Church in Canada we confess our own subordinate standards, which are fruits of the faith of our forebears as they sought to be faithful to God in their own place and time.¹⁰ We respectfully acknowledge and refer to these standards as we read and interpret the Scriptures, wrestling to speak God's Good News into our own present situation. Ministers of Word and Sacrament are bound to the subordinate standards in a thoughtful and evaluative role. Ministers continually test their relationship with the subordinate standards against their primary responsibility to the living Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, their continuing study of the scriptures within the church and their responsibility to the church catholic through the ecumenical creeds.¹¹

Our subordinate standards are the Westminster Confession of Faith as adopted in 1875 and 1889, the Declaration of Faith concerning Church and Nation of 1954, Living Faith, Foi Vivante, adopted in 1998 산 믿음¹² (sahn meed'm) as adopted in 2010 and such doctrine as the church, in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in the church's continuing function of reformulating the faith.

We, The Presbytery of (<name of the Presbytery>),¹³ having prayerfully discerned your gifts and call and recognizing your faith in Christ and your love for people, are now ready to ordain you to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. You have indicated that you are willing to make a solemn promise of commitment to uphold the life and confession we have articulated above. Through the laying on of hands our loving prayer is that God's grace might sustain and hold you in a special way through the joys and challenges of ministry. To publicly witness to your faith and commitment to this ministry we ask you to answer the following questions based in the preamble just read in your presence:

Preamble – Litany for Ministry of Word and Sacrament

One: How can the church minister in the world?

Many: All ministries of the church have their source in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Creator so loved all of creation¹⁴ that God came to us in the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, God's son, our Saviour and Lord and now sustains us by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

One: Where will our strength come from?

Many: The risen Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, "As the Father sent me so I send you" and he promised to be with them to the end of the age.¹⁶ This commission and promise to the disciples is an example, promise and command that sustains all the ministries of the church.

One: What should our response be?

Many: In response we submit ourselves to Jesus Christ who is our Prophet – the One who is truth - our Priest – the One who stands in our place and saves us – and our Sovereign – the One for whom we live our lives.

One: Who has called us to minister?

Many: Through Jesus Christ, God's Word made flesh and by the Spirit of God, the church is called into being. It is given strength to do its work and sent into the world to witness to abundant life, brought by the Spirit, through God's Good News of love, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and justice. All Christians are ministers of this Good News and called to witness to it in God's creation.¹⁷

One: What is our ministry?

Many: In response to God's loving gift of salvation, with the help of God's Spirit, we joyfully worship and praise God. In thankfulness and joy we cannot but help to serve and glorify God in love through Christ our Mediator and the Spirit our Helper.

One: How are we equipped for this ministry?

Many: So that the church may live and witness effectively and constantly be renewed and strengthened, God calls and gifts people for different ministries. These include those who make solemn promises¹⁸ to serve by preaching God's Word, administering the sacraments, giving leadership to the church, teaching and acting in various forms of mission that serve God's reign¹⁹ in the world.

One: How do we know who these ones will be?

Many: From the earliest times God has led the church to set aside and ordain people for the special ministry of Word and Sacrament. As a church we prayerfully discern and confirm gifts for ministry and God's call to that task in the lives of those who offer themselves for this ministry.

One: How do they equip us?

Many: The profound responsibility of those called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament is to guide the church by prayerfully and respectfully engaging with the historic Confessions²⁰ of the church in the light of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ – the Living Word. They know Jesus Christ through the Scriptures that bear witness to him as they are guided by the Holy Spirit.

One: To whom is our allegiance?

Many: The Presbyterian Church in Canada is bound to God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and known to us through Jesus Christ – God's Resurrected and Living Word.²¹

One: How will we know God?

Many: As Christians our deepest allegiance is to Jesus Christ. The whole of his history, from his birth, to his life, teaching, example and ministry and to his death, resurrection, ascension and reign, reveals God to us. Everything that we do, believe and teach are measured against his revelation. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the written word of God, revealing Jesus Christ. They are the measure, the canon, of all our teaching and discernment of truth.²² We accept they are historical documents, conditioned by the

language, thought and setting of their time. As we read them in their historical context, the Living Word of God is revealed. They are the means through which Jesus Christ leads and guides the church.

One: What helps us discern the way of Jesus Christ?

Many: As The Presbyterian Church in Canada we confess that there is one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of which we are part. We honour and respect the historically shaped tradition of the Christian church contained in its ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Reformation.

Within The Presbyterian Church in Canada we confess our own subordinate standards, which are fruits of the faith of our forebears as they sought to be faithful to God in their own place and time.²³ We respectfully acknowledge and refer to these standards as we read and interpret the Scriptures, wrestling to speak God's Good News into our own present situation.

One: How should the equipping ones use these subordinate standards?

Many: Ministers of Word and Sacrament are bound to the subordinate standards in a thoughtful and evaluative role. Ministers continually test their relationship with the subordinate standards against their primary responsibility to the living Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, their continuing study of the scriptures within the church and their responsibility to the church catholic through the ecumenical creeds.²⁴

One: What are these subordinate standards?

Many: Our subordinate standards are the Westminster Confession of Faith as adopted in 1875 and 1889, the Declaration of Faith concerning Church and Nation of 1954, Living Faith, Foi Vivante, adopted in 1998 산밋음²⁵(sahn meed'm) as adopted in 2010 and such doctrine as the church, in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in the church's continuing function of reformulating the faith.

We, The Presbytery of (<name of the Presbytery>),²⁶ having prayerfully discerned your gifts and call and recognizing your faith in Christ and your love for people, are now ready to ordain you to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. You have indicated that you are willing to make a solemn promise of commitment to uphold the life and confession we have articulated above. Through the laying on of hands our loving prayer is that God's grace might sustain and hold you in a special way through the joys and challenges of ministry. To publicly witness to your faith and commitment to this ministry we ask you to answer the following questions based in the preamble just spoken in your presence:

Edict to be read before the ordination/admission of Ruling Elders or Deacons

The following people, (names) members of this church, have been elected to the ministry of ruling elder (or deacon) by this congregation. The session has prayerfully discerned the call of those elected. This is a notice that the session will ordain them (and/or "admit them" for previously ordained elders) to this ministry on (date) at (time), unless a valid objection to the suitability of the candidate has been given to the moderator/minister before then.

Preamble for the Ordination/Admission of Ruling Elders

All ministries of the church have their source in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Creator so loved all of creation that God came to us in the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, God's son, our Saviour and Lord and now sustains us by the Holy Spirit.

The risen Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, "As the Father sent me so I send you" and he promised to be with them to the end of the age. This commission and promise to the disciples are an example, promise and command that sustains all the ministries of the church. In response we submit ourselves to Jesus Christ who is our Prophet – the One who is truth – our Priest – the One who stands in our place and saves us – and our Sovereign – the One for whom we live our lives.

Through Jesus Christ, God's Word made flesh and by the Spirit of God, the church is called into being. It is given strength to do its work and sent into the world to witness to abundant life, brought by the Spirit, through God's Good News of love, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and justice. All Christians are ministers of this Good News and called to witness to it in God's creation. In response to God's loving gift of salvation, with the help of God's Spirit, we joyfully worship and praise God. In thankfulness and joy we cannot but help to serve and glorify God in love through Christ our Mediator and the Spirit our Helper.

In the Presbyterian tradition we recognize that some people are gifted, called and set aside to be ministers of Word and Sacrament and others are gifted, called and set aside to exercise leadership and governance, together with ordained ministers, within congregations and the courts of the church. Within Reformed churches we name such people “ruling elders”.

As The Presbyterian Church in Canada we confess that there is one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of which we are part. We honour and respect the historically shaped tradition of the Christian church contained in its ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Reformation.

Within The Presbyterian Church in Canada we confess our own subordinate standards, which are fruits of the faith of our forebears as they sought to be faithful to God in their own place and time. We respectfully acknowledge and refer to these standards as we read and interpret the Scriptures, wrestling to speak God’s Good News into our own present situation.

Our subordinate standards are the Westminster Confession of Faith as adopted in 1875 and 1889, the Declaration of Faith concerning Church and Nation of 1954, Living Faith, Foi Vivante, adopted in 1998 산 믿음¹² (*sahn meed’m*) as adopted in 2010 and such doctrine as the church, in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in the church’s continuing function of reformulating the faith.

The congregation of (name) has prayerfully discerned your gifts and call and is now ready to ordain you as ruling elder. You have indicated that you are willing to make a solemn promise of commitment to God and to the wider Church, to uphold the life and confession just articulated. Through the laying on of hands our loving prayer is that God’s grace might sustain and hold you in a special way through the joys and challenges of your ministry as elder. To publicly witness to your faith and commitment to this ministry we ask you to answer the following questions based on this preamble:

¹ Rooted in the cosmic claims in the Pauline literature e.g., Colossians 1:20 (*ta panta*) or John 3:16 (*kosmos*).

² This formulation moves from a Christomonic approach to a Trinitarian approach while clearly delineating the key role of Christ.

³ This paragraph references scripture to show the Trinitarian basis of ministry, “The Father Sends the Son and so the Son sends the disciples in the power of the Spirit.” It also tries to clarify the Reformation concept of Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, as it can sometimes sound foreign.

⁴ This emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, signaling a Reformation principle.

⁵ The choice to use “solemn promise” rather than vow: this is in part a scriptural concern (Jesus questioning vows) and in another part, the lack of the common use of the word vow today.

⁶ Although the text refers to Jesus as Lord, this draft also used “God’s reign” to further explain this concept now somewhat foreign in democratic society. Later the supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ is also mentioned to make this more understandable. New Canadians are familiar with the concept of allegiance as they swear allegiance when they take the oath of citizenship.

⁷ The document “Confessing the Faith Today” 2003, explains at length The Presbyterian Church in Canada decision not to alter confessions but to accept them as documents of their place and time. This reference reflects that theology. The 2003 document exact wording is “In promising to uphold the church’s doctrine, these church officers make a commitment to be engaged in a thoughtful and evaluative dialogue with the subordinate standards, continually testing their own and the church’s adherence to the subordinate standards against their primary responsibility to the living Christ and through continuing study and teaching of the scriptures within the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

⁸ Again, this is a move to a Trinitarian formulation while also signifying the central and key place of Jesus Christ.

⁹ Living Faith 5.1, 5.4

¹⁰ This first sentence explains what subordinate standards are and where they come from as some may not be familiar with them.

¹¹ Adapted and taken from the Committee on Church Doctrine document “Confessing the Faith Today”, A&P 2003, p. 260.

¹² We will request a transliteration to be placed in brackets for those who read the preamble in English.

¹³ This last paragraph tries to recall the rationale of the process of recognizing a call and the responsibilities and promises contained in our theology of ministry.

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¹⁶ This paragraph references scripture to show the Trinitarian basis of ministry, “The Father Sends the Son and So the Son Sends the Disciples in the Power of the Spirit.” It also tries to clarify the Reformation concept of Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, as it can sometimes sound foreign.

¹⁷ This emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, signaling a Reformation principle.

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²¹ Again, this is a move to a Trinitarian formulation while also signifying the central and key place of Jesus Christ.

²² Living Faith 5.1, 5.4.

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