

A service to mark the Closing of a Church Building or the Dissolution of a Congregation

Using this service

The service which follows is designed as the last main act of worship in the building which is to be closed. Although the occasion is one of grief and regret, the service also strikes the note of thanksgiving. The service ends with a procession from the church in which is carried 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 proceed to an adjacent place.

Participants

Former ministers, office-bearers, and members may be invited to attend. Although not a Presbytery service, a representative from the Presbytery may also be invited. Consideration should be given to involving one or two representatives from significant parts of the congregation's life in the leading of worship.

Celebrating the history of the church

An Order of Service could contain historical information, both about the building and about those who contributed significantly to its life and worship. Greetings from former ministers or leaders could be included. There might also be some reminder of significant items of furnishing in the building, including the names of donors or the craftworkers responsible. Displays might be mounted of documents, photographs and artefacts.

In the service which follows, provision is made for contributions from those who can bring alive in words something of the past witness of the congregations who have used the building. These need not be 'experts' but could include current (senior or otherwise) members of the congregation, who may not offer information so much as reminiscences and testimonies. This section of the service could be presented, not only in single contributions, but in such forms as interview or dialogue. There could be a role for a narrator.

Holy Communion

Provision is made for the celebration of Holy Communion.

Service for the Closing of a Church Building or the Dissolution of a Congregation

1 Call to Worship

The minister says:

Let us worship God.

2 Hymn

3 Scripture Sentence

The minister may say one or more of the following:

Lord, I love the house where you dwell,
the place where your glory resides.

Psalm 26: 8

The Most High does not live in houses made with human hands;
as the prophet says, Heaven is my throne and earth my footstool.

Acts 7: 48

Be rooted in Christ, be built in him, grow strong in the faith.

Colossians 2: 7

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

Hebrews 13: 8

4 Declaration of purpose

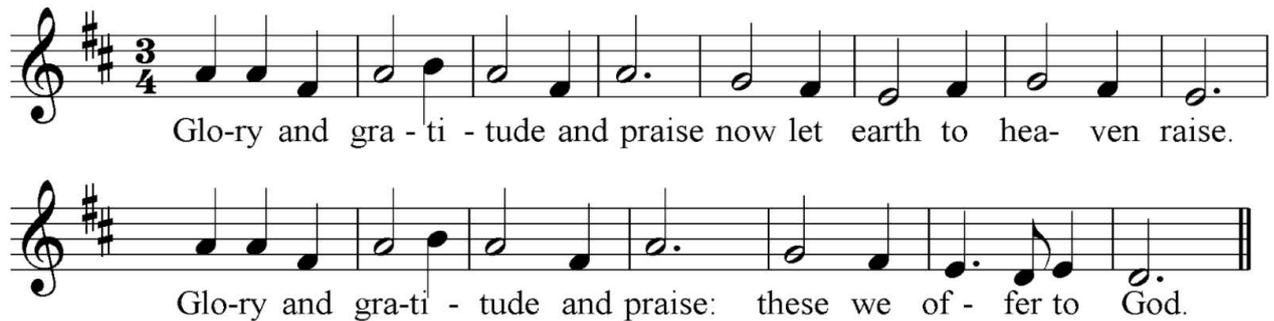
The minister says:

The time has come for this congregation of Christ's holy Church to [dissolve and] take leave of this building. It has been dedicated for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. It has provided refuge and comfort for God's people. It has served this household of faith.

Such a moment must always be a time of sorrow, even grief, but it is also a time above all to give thanks, remembering that the witness of the faithful goes on wherever the faithful are to be found. It is the end of a chapter; but it is also the beginning of a new chapter. Let us therefore, as we take our leave [of one another] and of this house, lift up our hearts in thanksgiving.

5 The story of the church

Brief accounts are given by several people of aspects of the life of the church over the years. Each contribution could be concluded with the singing of this shorter song/chant.



Glo-ry and gra - ti - tude and praise now let earth to hea- ven raise.

Glo-ry and gra-ti - tude and praise: these we of - fer to God.

6 Prayers

The minister says:

Let us pray.

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,
we praise you, Creator God.

For those who came here as children to learn of you
and to be received within your covenant of grace,
we praise you, Creator God.

For the young who have grown in you,
and matured in you,
and have been challenged by your claims,
we praise you, Creator God.

For those who have come together in marriage, have
rejoiced in your gift of children,
and have learned to know you better
in learning to love each other more truly,
we praise you, Creator God.

For those who have taught in Sunday School,
and for all who have learned from one another
and from you,

we praise you, Creator God.

For the ministers, elders, members of Boards and committees,
for musicians and choir members,
for members of the Guild, of societies and groups,
all who have given their time and talents
for the work and worship of this church,

we praise you, Creator God.

For the knowledge that your church continues
and that the work of the people of this congregation
continues,

we praise you, Creator God.

For the common life of this congregation,
for the special occasions and the ordinary,
for joys and sorrows, opportunities and challenges,
for all these things and more,

we praise you, Creator God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:

**as it was in the beginning,
is now and will be for ever.**

Amen.

7 Hymn

8 Readings

9 Sermon

10 Apostles' Creed *may be said or Hymn of affirmation sung*

11 Announcements

12 Offering

13 Prayers

The minister says:

God of the nations,
whose kingdom rules over all:
have mercy on our broken and divided world. Shed
abroad your peace in the hearts of all people, and
banish from them the spirit that makes for war;
that all races and peoples may learn to live
as members of one family,
and in obedience to your laws;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray for the well-being
of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
So guide and guard it by your good Spirit
that all who profess and call themselves Christians
may be led into the way of truth,
and hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit
and in righteousness of life.

We pray for this congregation of your people: help
them to know that when they leave this place they
do not leave your presence;
and when they go out from this building,
they do not leave the Church.

**And now, in the unity of faith,
in the communion of saints,
in love and goodwill to all,
in remembrance of those
who built and maintained this place,
we dedicate ourselves anew
in the service of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Father . . .

14 Hymn

Holy Communion may follow

15 Leave - Taking

The minister says:

We leave this place where we have felt God's presence near.
We know he dwells not only in temples made with human hands, but also in the hearts of those who give him room.

All say:

We therefore pray:

**Come, fill us with your Holy Spirit,
that we may be your temple,
and when we go from here,
may worship you in spirit and in truth,
with a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
and a new joy in your service.**

Amen.

16 Hymn

The pulpit Bible, baptismal bowl and/or water pitcher and the Holy Communion vessels, are carried from the church, the people following.

17 Benediction

Outside the church, the minister says:

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

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

Amen.

The Greeting of Peace may be shared amongst those present.

Scripture Lessons may be chosen from the following:

OLD TESTAMENT Genesis 28:10-22; 1 Kings 8: 22-30

PSALMS 10-12; 122:24; 27:1-10, 13-14; 43:3-5; 48:9-14; 68:18-20, 24-29, 32-35; 84:1-7,

EPISTLE 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5; Ephesians 1:3-23; Ephesians 2:13-22; Colossians 3:1-4, 12-17;

1 John 4:7-21; Revelation 21:9-14, 22-27

GOSPEL St Mark 12:1-11; St Luke 9:1-6; St John 10:1-18; St John 15:1-17; St John 17:1-11

Notes

The service is from the Church of Scotland Ordinal and Service Book: Interim Edition
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Part 4 is based on United Church in Canada - Celebrate God's Presence

Part 5 is based on material from the Presbyterian Church of Canada

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Come all you people. Wild Goose Publications. There is a 4-part harmony arrangement
in the source publication.