

Commissioning of Accredited Lay Preachers

A commissioning service is conducted by a District/Area Council after accreditation by the Ministries Committee on behalf of the General Assembly. The commissioning may be a special service and the District or Area Lay Preaching Commissioner may share in the leadership of it.

If the service takes place on a Sunday at the lay preacher's own church it is usually the minister of that church who presides. When it is part of an act of worship at an ordinary meeting of the Council the District President normally presides.

The service offered below may be appropriately adapted for use at a service for a lay preacher to be recognised by the District/Area Council.

The act of commissioning should follow the sermon or another form of proclamation of the Word.

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1. Introduction
 2. Statement
 3. Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D)
 4. Affirmations
 5. Commissioning
 6. Declaration
 7. Presentation

1. Introduction

Hear this, all you peoples;
give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
both low and high,
rich and poor together.
My mouth shall speak wisdom;
the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.

Psalm 49:1-3

or

Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what he has done for me.
I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me.

Psalm 66:16-17, 20

or

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

Isaiah 50:4

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the head of the Church,
we are now to commission as a lay preacher N,
who has been recognised by the XY District Council
and accredited by the General Assembly
of the United Reformed Church.

2. Statement by the lay preacher

*The lay preacher makes a statement concerning his/her faith
and sense of calling.*

3. Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church

The Statement (Basis of Union, Schedule D) is read in one of the approved forms.

4. Affirmations

The congregation is invited to stand as the presiding minister asks the lay preacher to affirm his/her faith:

N, do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

I do.

Do you reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord, promising to follow him and seeking to do his will all the days of your life?

Trusting in God's grace, I do.

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

I do.

Do you believe that you are called to preach the gospel of God's love and mercy revealed in Jesus Christ?

I do.

Do you undertake to exercise your ministry in accordance with the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith, and Order of the United Reformed Church?

I do.

The presiding minister asks the congregation:

Do you, the members of this local church
and the members of XY District/Area Council
accept N as a lay preacher
and promise *him/her*
your prayerful support and encouragement
in this ministry?

We do.

5. Commissioning

Ever gracious God,
you have brought us into your Church
and made us your witnesses,
giving us the gifts we need
to proclaim the gospel of your holy love.
We give thanks today for N,
whom you have called to be a preacher of your Word,
and in your name we commission *him/her*
to the office of lay preacher.
Inspire *him/her* with your Holy Spirit
so that *he/she* will be fired with passion
and always seek deeper understanding
of the gospel *he/she* proclaims.
Sustain *him/her* in *his/her* calling,
when it is easy and when it is difficult.
May *he/she* find eager hearers
who respond to *his/her* proclamation,
and give *him/her* their support and encouragement.

Keep *him/her* humble,
but make *him/her* aware of what *he/she* brings
to the life and well-being of the Church, as,
through *his/her* preaching,
the gospel is proclaimed.

Keep *him/her* ever hopeful
and keep *him/her* ever joyful.
Bring *him/her*
and all of us at the last
to full maturity in Christ,
in whose name we pray.

Amen.

6. Declaration

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the only head of the Church,
and in accordance with the
decision of the *X Y District/Area Council*,
and of the General Assembly,
I declare you to be commissioned
to the office of lay preacher
in the United Reformed Church.
In token of this I give you the right hand of fellowship.

7. Presentation

The certificate and also a Bible or other suitable gift may be presented.

The service concludes with the Lord's Supper or with a hymn and blessing.

The following readings are appropriate:

Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures:
Numbers 11:16-17, Isaiah 40:1-11, Isaiah 52:7-12,
Jeremiah 1:4-10, Jeremiah 23:16-22.

New Testament:
Matthew 9:32-38, Luke 10:1-6, John 15:1-17, Acts 11:19-26,
Romans 1:8-17, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, 1 Peter 4:8-14

