

A Liturgy to **Affirm the Ministry of God's People**

Introduction

1. Christian ministry is exercised by all those who are baptised. This ministry takes many forms. At its heart it is not just acts of individuals but an expression of the corporate nature of the gospel as God calls us into a new relationship with each other, focussed on the person and work of Christ and empowered by the Spirit that flows from his cross and resurrection.
2. In order to work as a body the church has the orders of bishop, priest and deacon as well as the variety of ministries exercised by all the baptised.
3. Celebrating and affirming the ministries of the whole people of God and the particular ministries of those who are ordained is an important action of the church. Such an affirmation is sometimes done in Holy Week, in conjunction with the blessing of oil and chrism for use in the church. It also appropriate at other times when a representative group of the church are gathered.

The Structure of the Liturgy

The Gathering of the Community

- Greeting
- Song of Praise
- Act of Penitence
- The Collect

The Proclamation

- The Readings
- Gospel Reading
- Sermon (optional)

The Liturgy of Ministry Affirmation

- Affirmation of the Ministry of God's People

The Prayers of the People

- Prayers of Intercession
- Lord's Prayer (if not said elsewhere)

The Ministry of the Sacrament

- The Peace
- The Preparation of the Gifts
- The Great Thanksgiving
- The Communion (with the Lord's Prayer before or after it, if not said elsewhere)
- Prayer after Communion

The Dismissal of the Community

- Blessing (optional)
- Dismissal

May God who has given us the will to do these things, give us more and more the grace and power to perform them, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The service continues with either **The Prayers of the People** and/or the following prayer and then **The Peace**.*

Everloving God,
in our baptism you made us witnesses
to the death and resurrection of your Son.
Send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us,
as we take upon us the yoke of your obedience.
Make us instruments of your peace,
and doers of your perfect will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Notes

1. This service may be used on any suitable occasion when it is desired to affirm the ministry of clergy and people. It is the custom in some places to do this in Holy Week in conjunction with the Chrism Eucharist. If this custom is followed, care needs to be taken that the Affirmation of Ministry does not overshadow the Chrism Eucharist itself and the themes of Holy Week. Other suitable occasions for the Affirmation of Ministry are Ascension Day, a diocesan synod service, or some other diocesan gathering.
2. In Holy Week and at a Chrism Eucharist, the Sentence, Prayers and Readings for the Day or for the Chrism Eucharist are used. On other occasions, the Sentence, Prayers and Readings for the Day may be used or the following:

Sentence

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4,7

Collect

Gracious God,
you anointed your Son Jesus Christ
with the Holy Spirit and with power
to bring to the world the blessings of your reign:
may we who share in his suffering and his victory
bear witness to the gospel of salvation;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

Amen.

Readings

Isaiah 61.1-9

Or Exodus 19:3-8

Or Numbers 11:24-29
shared

Ephesians 4:1-13

Or 1 Corinthians 12:14-31a

Or 1 Peter 4:7-11

gifts

Matthew 9:35-38

Or Luke 12:35-43

Or John 4:31-38

God's holy people

Promise of a covenant

Moses' ministry

Gifts of ministry

One body, many parts

Stewards of God's

The harvest

Faithful servants

Sent to reap

Post Communion Sentence

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins with his life's blood, who made of us a royal house to serve as the priests of his God and Father - to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. *Revelation 1:6*

3. The readings may be assigned to appropriate clergy or laity to read.
4. The Prayers of the People may be led by representatives of both clergy and laity.
5. Thought needs to be given to the location of people and groups in the church, both to minimise unnecessary movement, but also to make the interaction and mutuality of all ministry visible.

The representative layperson, deacon and priest say together,

Do you now, *N*, rededicate yourself to this ministry and reaffirm the promises you made when you were ordained?

The bishop (or bishops) responds

I do. God give me grace to lead you with all diligence and perseverance.

In the following, Partners in Ministry, the first section is said by one half of those present, the second by the other half, and the third by all present.

Partners in Ministry

We are partners in the mystery of redemption,
partners in the mystery of reconciliation,
partners in the world's suffering and pain,
partners in the way of the cross.

We are partners in the ministry of service,
partners in the ministry of justice and peace,
partners in healing and hope for the world,
partners in the liturgy of Church and life.

**Together we reach out to touch the untouchable.
Together we move out to teach the untaught.
Together we stand up to show Christ's love in the world.
Thank you, O God,
for the gift and the grace of partnership
in the mystery of living.**

The bishop then says

God calls us to unity in Christ through all our ministries.

The deacons respond

I will. Christ calls us to show love, care and compassion. God give us courage to strive for justice and peace among all people.

The representative lay person says to all the priests present

Will you, who have been called to be priests, call us together so that we may in word and sacrament know ourselves as God's people and proclaim the Lord's saving death until he comes?

The priests respond

I will. I commit myself anew to this ministry. I will proclaim the word of God and celebrate the sacraments of the new covenant.

To the bishop (or bishops) present

A bishop shares in the ministry of Christ as apostle, chief priest and pastor of the diocese and in the whole Church of God.

The following section is said by a deacon.

You have been called to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel of Christ; to maintain the Church's ordained ministry, and to encourage all who follow Christ in their life and ministries above all through the sacraments of baptism and eucharist.

The following section is said by a priest.

You have been charged to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to be in all things a faithful pastor and wholesome example for the entire flock of Christ.

A LITURGY TO AFFIRM THE MINISTRY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

AN AFFIRMATION OF MINISTRY

After the Gospel Reading (and the Sermon if there is one) the Bishop invites all the baptised to stand and addresses them. All remain standing throughout this part of the service.

Brothers and sisters, by our baptism we are made members of Christ and of one another in him. By being in Christ, we are Christians, Christ's anointed ones. We are called to carry out the priestly work of Christ as he reconciles all creation to God, its source of life and being. Let us dedicate ourselves afresh to Christ's service, as stewards of the mysteries of God, and ministers of God's grace.

Will you, anointed by the Spirit of God, strive afresh to spread the love of Christ abroad to bring healing and wholeness, to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

The people respond

With the Lord's help, I will.

The bishop continues

Christ has many services to be done. Some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some conform to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both. In some, we may please Christ and please ourselves, in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is given in Christ who strengthens us.

**Faithful God,
in the name of Christ and in the power of your Spirit,
we commit ourselves to you and one another,
to live, work, and pray as one body in Christ,
to trust each other as fellow workers in your church,
and to give ourselves with body, mind, and spirit
to the ministries to which you have called us.
Give us vision, give us courage, and give us joy,
that the world may believe that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to your eternal glory. Amen.**

A representative lay person then says to all those who are ordained.

In order to carry out this ministry, we need to be formed as a body in which these gifts work for the good of all. After his resurrection and ascension Christ gave gifts abundantly to the Church. Some he made apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers; to equip God's people for their work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ. This is the gift of order in the church.

We stand within a tradition in which there are deacons, priests and bishops. They are called and empowered to fulfil an ordained ministry to enable the whole mission of the Church.

You have been called to be deacons, priests and bishops among us. Do you, in the presence of Christ and his church, renew your commitment to enabling us to be the Church of Christ?

All those who are ordained respond.

I do. May God strengthen the community of faith through my work.

The representative lay person continues

Building up the body of Christ requires that you faithfully proclaim the good news, gather the church for its worship and see that people are cared for with compassion.

**In my listening may I hear,
in my watching may I see,
in my caring may I respond,
with heart and mind open to Christ.**

Will you be constant in prayer and study, nourish us with the story of all that God has done, and set forth the doctrines of the faith as this Church has received them?

I will. May the scriptures continue to reveal to me the mind and heart of Christ and shape my ministry. God give me imagination and perseverance in prayer.

Will you continue to accept the order and discipline of this Church and the guidance and leadership of your bishop(s)?

Yes, I will. May God give us grace to work in partnership with all our sisters and brothers in Christ's service.

The following sections specifically addressed to deacons, priests and bishops may be omitted. If they are omitted, the Affirmation continues with "Partners in Ministry".

The representative lay person says to all the deacons present

Will you, who have been called to be deacons, help us seek the lost and lonely, caring for all God's people whatever their need?