

A service of Blessing to mark Retirement

¶ Introduction

The ending of a particular ministry through retirement is an important transition both for the minister facing retirement and for the communities which he or she has served. At its heart is the laying down of 'office' for the individual involved. This frequently means a loss of role, position and status. On the other hand it can also mean a liberation into a new or different form of ministry. For the community the transition prepares for and anticipates the continuity of its life with a different minister or a different arrangement for ministry.

These resources are offered to mark the transition to retirement in the context of worship. Balancing the elements of thanksgiving, leave-taking and farewell will be the task of the community and minister involved, as will be the decision as to whether or not a penitential rite is appropriate. It is assumed in the outline below that the President of the liturgy is *not* the departing minister.

The resources could also be used in the context of a service of Holy Communion presided over by a departing priest or by another. In this case it would be helpful if another minister were present to represent the continuity of ministry in the church, and to conduct the Sending Out, especially if the service includes the laying down of symbols of office.

¶ Preparation

These opening verses may be sung by a choir, or by a cantor and congregation, or said as a dialogue between president and congregation, or by a solo voice, or the entire section may be replaced by a hymn.

During the following psalm verses, those who are about to retire may place on the table a symbol of continuing ministry, for example, a Bible, a stole or a Reader's scarf.

I will bless the Lord at all times; ♦
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.

My soul shall glory in the Lord; ♦
let the humble hear and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me; ♦
let us exalt his name together.

Look upon him and be radiant ♦
and your faces shall not be ashamed.

Psalm 34.1-3, 5

¶ The Gathering

Greeting and Welcome

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

The president welcomes the congregation and those about to retire and outlines the intentions of the service:

- to give thanks to God for a particular ministry
- to remember all that has been achieved and to express sorrow for any failures
- to pray for those who are now moving on into retirement
- to pray for those who remain and for their future

The Collect

The president introduces a period of silent prayer with the words 'Let us pray' or a more specific bidding.

Go before us, Lord, in all our doings
with your most gracious favour,
and further us with your continual help;
that in all our works,
begun, continued and ended in you,
we may glorify your holy name
and finally by your mercy
obtain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

or

O God of comfort and hope
whose presence is ever reliable
and ever unexpected:
grant us to let go what is ending,
to welcome what is beginning
and always to listen to your voice
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

¶ The Word of God

Readings

Either one or two readings from Scripture precede the Gospel reading.

Suggested readings.

From the Old Testament:

Isaiah 40.28-31

Isaiah 43.1-7, 10-12

Proverbs 8.1,21-31

Ecclesiastes 3.1-8

Ecclesiastes 3.10-15

From the New Testament:

Romans 8. 31-39

2 Corinthians 3.17-18

Philippians 4.4-9

Colossians 1.9-14

Hebrews 13.7-8, 14-18

Hebrews 4.4,9-10

A hymn, anthem or the following or another psalm may be sung either between the readings, if there is more than one, or after the second reading.

Psalm 121

Refrain: The Lord shall keep you from all evil.

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills; ♦
from where is my help to come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord, ♦
the maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not suffer your foot to stumble; ♦
he who watches over you will not sleep.
- 4 Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel ♦
shall neither slumber nor sleep. **R**
- 5 The Lord himself watches over you; ♦
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,

- 6 So that the sun shall not strike you by day, ♦
 neither the moon by night.
- 7 The Lord shall keep you from all evil; ♦
 it is he who shall keep your soul.
- 8 The Lord shall keep watch over your going out
 and your coming in, ♦
 from this time forth for evermore.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Refrain: The Lord shall keep you from all evil.

Gospel Reading

If this material, is used within a service of Holy Communion, the Gospel Reading follows here.

At a Service of the Word, one of these Gospel readings may be used as a second reading.

Mark 1:14-20
Mark 10:28-31
Matthew 5.13-18
Matthew 6.25-34
Matthew 11.15-30
Matthew 13.44-52
Luke 6.46-49
Luke 11.9-13
John 15.1-5, 8-11; 12-17

Sermon

Creed

The Apostles Creed may be said to reaffirm shared baptismal faith or, at a service of Holy Communion, the Nicene Creed may be said.

¶ The Prayers

Prayers of Thankfulness

This prayer may follow as a dialogue between the minister(s) about to retire and the congregation.

Minister	I give thanks to God for his faithfulness; for all the blessings I have received as his minister, for the joy of serving his people, for all lessons learnt, for hopes fulfilled, and for all that has been accomplished through his grace.
Congregation	We give thanks to God for his faithfulness; for all the blessings we have received through your ministry, for the joy of serving with you in the ministry we share, for lessons learnt, for hopes fulfilled, and for all that has been accomplished through his grace.

If prayers of penitence are appropriate they follow here:

Prayers of Penitence

Congregation	When we have failed to receive God's word, when we have expected to be loved without loving, when we have forgotten to pray, When our faith has been in ourselves alone, Good Lord, forgive us.
Minister	When I have failed to listen to God's word, When my love has been cold, When my prayers have been few, When my faith has run dry: Good Lord, forgive me.
Congregation	When we have betrayed our calling Good Lord, forgive us.
Minister	When I have betrayed my calling, Good Lord, forgive me.

All **When there are issues unresolved,
or injuries unhealed,
or if hurt lies between us,
Good Lord, forgive us, now.**

President Give us true repentance;
forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance
and our deliberate sins;
and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit
to amend our lives according to your holy word.

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Praise

A hymn or song(s) of praise may follow, or Te Deum Laudamus, Gloria in Excelsis or the following Litany of the Resurrection

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious:
and his mercy endures for ever.

He has loved us from all eternity:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And remembered us when we were in trouble:
for his mercy endures for ever.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
for his mercy endures for ever.

He became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man:
for his mercy endures for ever.

By his cross and passion he has redeemed the world:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And has washed us from our sins in his own blood:
for his mercy endures for ever.

On the third day he rose again:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And has given us the victory:
for his mercy endures for ever.

He ascended into heaven:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And opened wide for us the everlasting doors:
for his mercy endures for ever.

He is seated at the right hand of the Father:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And ever lives to make intercession for us:
for his mercy endures for ever.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever.
Amen.**

If appropriate the second part of the Litany of the Resurrection may follow here:

For the gift of his Spirit:
blessed be Christ.

For the catholic Church:
blessed be Christ.

For the means of grace:
blessed be Christ.

For the hope of glory:
blessed be Christ.

For the triumphs of his gospel:
blessed be Christ.

For the lives of his saints:
blessed be Christ.

In joy and in sorrow:
blessed be Christ.

In life and in death:
blessed be Christ.

Now and to the end of the ages:
blessed be Christ.

The Peace

The president introduces the Peace with one of the following:

May the God of peace sanctify you:
may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness
that you may be blameless before him
at the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints.

(or)

Jesus says to his disciples,
‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid.’
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

The Lord’s Prayer

Awaiting the fulfilment of all God’s promises,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven.....

or

Awaiting the fulfilment of all God’s promises,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

Our Father who art in heaven.....

Prayer of Blessing

The departing minister prays for God's blessing on the people he or she is to leave, in this or another form:

The Lord bless you and keep you
the Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you
the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you
and give you his peace
now and for ever.

Amen.

A hymn may follow.

¶ Sending Out

If the person or people retiring have keys, symbols of office or licences, these should be given now to those who gave them or their representatives.

If those retiring are priests or Readers, they may take their stoles or a scarf from the holy table as a sign of their continuing ministry.

They then move towards the door of the church.

The President says:

God of our beginnings and endings
we ask your blessing as N (and M. continues on his / her journey.
May the love and friendship we have shared
be a bond that unites us in days and years to come.

May the power of your presence
bless this moment of our leave taking.
This we ask, for the sake for Jesus Christ our Redeemer.
Amen.

Verses from Psalm 121 may follow if they have not been used earlier

The Lord himself watches over you; ♦
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
So that the sun shall not strike you by day, ♦
neither the moon by night.

The Lord shall keep you from all evil; ♦
it is he who shall keep your soul.

The Lord shall keep watch over your going out
and your coming in, ♦
from this time forth for evermore.

The president says to the retiring minister(s)

As you journey onward,
trusting in God's power and promise,
we assure you of our love and prayers.

Minister As I leave, seeking to follow God's call
 I assure you of *my* love and prayers.

President As you enter your new life
 we pray that you may see in all you meet
 the face of Christ.

Minister As you continue to grow in the life of Christ
 I pray that you may always see the face of Christ in one another.

President Go in peace for God goes with you.

Minister Thanks be to God.

The president says to all

Go in the light and peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

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