

Chapter eight: Godly order

This chapter has comments on the following services in the Leader's Book:

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| THE ORDERING OF THE CHURCH | Ordination of a Minister of the Word Induction of a Minister of the Word |
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ORDINATION OF A MINISTER OF THE WORD *PERSPECTIVES*

Ordination is one way a Christian may fulfil his/her baptismal call to mission. It is not a superior (or inferior) way; it is one of that marvellous variety of ministries to which God calls those who are 'in Christ'.

All ministries have the same origin and the same end — as is affirmed in the opening sentences of the service for the Commissioning of Elders (see LB 548 and PB 109). When the church ordains Ministers of the Word, it is setting in its midst a sign of the continuing faithfulness of God. The *Basis of Union* declares that God has never left himself without witnesses, and the Uniting Church therefore commits itself first to recognise what God does, and then to call and set apart some of its members to maintain the apostolic witness to Christ in the church (see paragraph 14a). To put it provocatively, while baptised members are called to the whole mission of God in the world, and are free to serve where they wish, Ministers of the Word have accepted a narrower focus: the equipping of the saints. And the saints, the baptised, need such a ministry among them.

Nevertheless, it is very easy to focus on the human dimension of all this. Ordination services can become a formality, occasions when the presbytery gathers to do business, albeit its proper business. Ordination services can also appear to be the personal celebration of the ordinand or the particular parish. Yet the New Testament is clear in its emphasis: all ministry comes from God; it is God who calls and God who equips. Ordination is God's act, and the service is a service of worship.

The novelty, the legal and ecumenical implications, the logistics of a

large service can all get in the way of this primary purpose. What follows is an attempt to help chairpersons of presbyteries, and others charged with the responsibility of arranging ordinations to order a service of worship which gives God glory.

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The first rubric implies a procession, which is suitable on a solemn occasion. Its purpose is not to elevate some above others (and therefore should not consist only of ministers) but to symbolise that the church, in its variety of ministries, gathers to offer its worship.

A wise presbytery will decide on guidelines for the dress of its ministerial members and for its chairperson, and on who should join the procession and where they should sit. This is not for the sake of uniformity; it has to do with being a particular called and dedicated community. Those who exercise their individuality have every right to do so, but they thereby cut themselves off from the body and weaken the sense of corporate responsibility and mutual support expressed (in however fragile a form) by acts of solidarity in dress and processions.

Note (xii) suggests that if liturgical colours are used, red is appropriate for ordinations and inductions; or else the Uniting Church blue scarf if liturgical dress is worn. A lay chairperson may wear the alb: scarf without alb looks — and is — half-dressed.

1 HYMN

Someone needs to be designated to announce the hymn, prefacing it with 'Let us worship God'.

3 SCRIPTURE SENTENCES

This raises two matters. First, if an order of service is to be printed, it need consist only of the headings of the service, plus any essential responses required by the people. Most leaders will need the *Leader's Book* for the more detailed parts, which need not be in front of the people. Secondly, scripture verses here should be of the nature of a call to worship, if that has not already happened before the announcement of the hymn. Otherwise they may be omitted (the service is long and full of words!)

4 PRAYERS

Strictly there is no need for a prayer of adoration if the opening hymn expressed that theme. The prayer in the text is an excellent example of such a prayer, however, and sets forth the central purpose of the service succinctly.

Other prayers may be substituted; the Confession could take a responsive form as in *The Service of the Lord's Day* (LB 84), and would need to be printed. It need not be long.

The Collect (LB 504) concerns the ministry of the ordained in the church.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

This may take the form found in The Service of the Lord's Day. The sermon may include the charge, but if that is to be later in the service (#13 or before #18), the sermon should be commensurately briefer (see Notes vi and vii).

THE SERVICE OF 12 PRESENTATION OF ORDINATION THE ORDINAND

In other traditions, the ancient custom of the people giving their assent or even electing the candidates for ministry is kept. However, this lacks any reality, since examinations and interviews need to take place at length, over some time. Nevertheless, since ministry does arise from the church, it is important that the church knows what is being done in its name. The 'narration of steps', while it should be brief, need not be formal. It needs to include the resolution of presbytery (see note viii), but it should also tell something of the story of the candidate's work with parish, Theological Hall and presbytery to discern a call to ministry.

The primacy of the *church's* call to ministry (the church speaking in God's name) is preserved in the question (LB 507): 'Are you willing to be ordained?' So much emphasis seems to be placed nowadays on the initiative of the candidate that we have forgotten that the church used to call people who did not believe that they had such a vocation; where is the reluctance of the prophet now? God calls through the voice of the church: the candidate assents.

The ordinand's brief statement is also focused on 'his/her faith and call to ministry'. It is an opportunity for the congregation to hear his/her testimony, to have some notion of why the church discerned a call from God in this person.

13 THE CHARGE

See the Appendix on LB 516–518.

14 THE VOWS

This section is mandatory, by Assembly decision, and may not be varied. It is a public declaration of the faith and order of the Uniting Church in Australia in regard to its understanding of ministry. It contains the central disciplines of ordained ministry. Ministers present at an ordination would do well to answer the questions quietly for themselves as a re-dedication.

If a 'quiet day' or other form of preparation is held by the presbytery for the ordinand, these vows would form part of the day's study and contemplation. It is worth comparing them with vows of other traditions, including those of the churches before union. The charge too may be read as a meditation and summary of the commitment the ordinand is about to make.

Biographies

If an order of service is to be printed, it is useful to invite ordinands to write a brief summary of their life and work prior to theological study, and details of their family, etc., to be printed on, for example, the back cover. This means that such matters need not be included in the 'narration of steps'.

How many hands?

Since it is God who ordains, it is not necessary for all members of a presbytery to lay hands on the candidate. Nor, if the gesture is a symbol, is it necessary for the whole presbytery to descend on the candidate! The presbytery designates a suitable number: the chairperson, perhaps a representative of ordained and of lay members of presbytery, and perhaps two others who may be nominated by the ordinand and approved by presbytery. (The presbytery needs to approve because these nominations signify the action of the church, not sentimental attachments.) Then the laying on of hands can be done in reasonable order, it being possible for five hands to touch the ordinand's head.

The prayer at the end of the vows brings us back to the source: the God who summons also provides.

15 THE ORDINATION

Ordination is 'by prayer and the laying on of hands', as the *Basis of Union* says (14a). It is primarily by prayer, since the actor in ordination is God; the ancient purpose of the laying on of hands was fundamentally to indicate the particular person for whom the prayer was being said. There are many examples in the scriptures of this gesture making personal a prayer for God's blessing, for strength, healing, commissioning, etc. — see such passages as Genesis 48, Acts 8:19, 13:3, 1 Timothy 4:14. Our traditions historically have not consistently used the imposition of hands at ordinations, and we are not likely to be under any illusion that it is the chairperson of presbytery who him/herself confers ministry by that action.

It is important, however, that this whole section be seen, and be led, as prayer: prayer in silence for the ordinand, prayer of praise to God for the gifts given to the church in the past; a petition for the Spirit, the imperative form of which is intended to convey the church's confidence in God's faithfulness. The whole congregation may sing a blessing (the Aaronic, LB 512, AHB 572).

There are other ways of ordering these various elements and of expressing the different parts of the prayer. The Uniting Church preserves two important elements of tradition: silent prayer at this point, and the singing of one of the great hymns of the Holy Spirit, such as the *Veni Creator*, (Come, Holy Spirit) (AHB 308).

It may preserve the atmosphere of prayer if the people appointed to lay on hands move to take their places during, rather than after, this hymn. The rubric (LB 511) suggests that the chairperson pray 'with both hands extended over the ordinand', a gesture appropriate to a prayer of invocation; someone else will need to hold the chairperson's book.

16 DECLARATION OF ORDINATION

The chairperson now proclaims the ordination, rather as a baptism is proclaimed (see LB 25: 'N is now received into the holy catholic Church according to Christ's command'). The ordination is in the name of the Lord of the church, and is a ministry in the church of God; yet because of our divisions, it is by the limited authority of a presbytery of the Uniting Church. It is entirely appropriate for the people to express their joy, though it sometimes helps if one or two braver souls lead the applause. The singing of a doxology returns the praise to God.

17 PRESENTATION OF THE BIBLE

In the Uniting Church, the Bible is the single symbol of ministry. The church ordains ministers because it 'lives by the power of the Word, [and] is assured that God . . . has never left himself without witness to that Word' (*Basis*, 14a). The ordination vows make it clear that the witness to Christ is in 'the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments' (LB 509); a New Testament alone or book of Gospels will not suffice.

The chairperson may consult with the ordinand over the purchase of

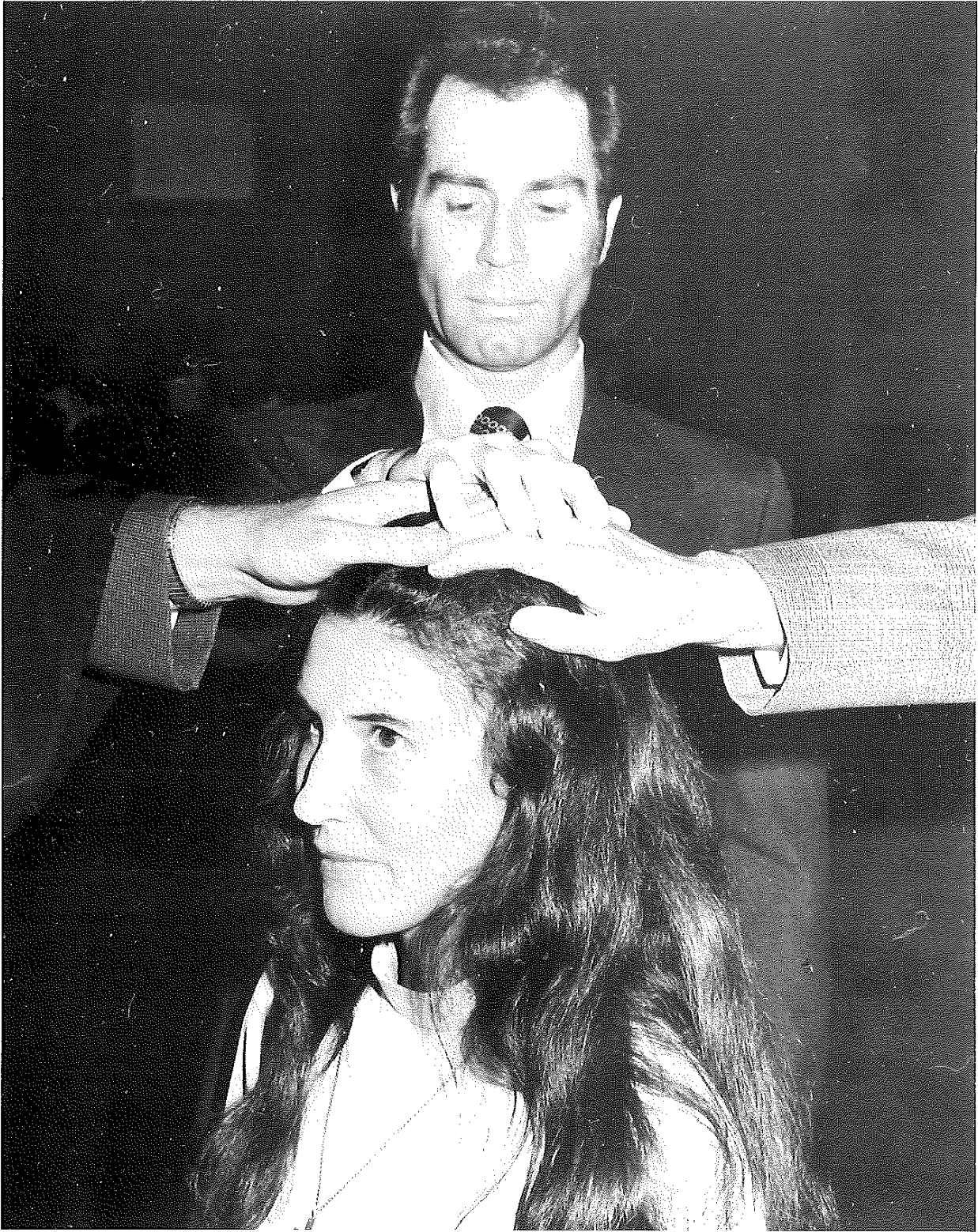


Photo: New Times

a particular version of the Bible. There is value in a symbol which will actually be used for the preparation of preaching and teaching!

Because a ministerial stole or scarf is a secondary symbol of office, no words are provided for its presentation. A stole is a specific symbol of ordained ministry, and should not be worn by anyone else. The red colour is a reminder of the prayer to the Spirit at the heart of the ordination service. The blue scarf (usually decorated with a logo) designates a denomination, the Uniting Church, and the holder of an office in that church, which includes ordained ministry. Nevertheless, other offices in the Uniting Church are open to both ministers and lay people: thus is it appropriate for lay chairpersons to wear a scarf (see Note xii). Stole and scarf are both intended to be worn over an alb.

18 THE PEACE

The Peace proceeds in two stages here, since 'the right hand of fellowship' is surely the same thing. The presbytery greets the newly-ordained minister — after the presentation of the Bible, some members of presbytery need to be ready to come forward, so that the movement flows. Then the newly-ordained minister gives the general greeting. There is no special reason, however, why the new minister should not first give the greeting, and let the greeting occur naturally.

The Peace normally (as in the Service of the Lord's Day) forms the link between the services of the Word and of the Sacrament. Liturgically speaking, it should be after the Offering and Prayers of the People which are responses to the Word preached. It may seem right to presbytery organisers to offer intercessions immediately after the presentation of the Bible, and then take up the offering. The Peace will then lead into the sacrament and specifically into the hymn. This delays the greeting somewhat further from the act of ordination, but is there any reason for haste?

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

It is better at this point simply to turn to the Service of the Lord's Day (LB 90, PB 65) and follow the order from there. It has the advantage of being able to use the *People's Book*, or at least the framework there as a guide. In its preparation of services, the Assembly Commission on Liturgy completed its work on the Ordination Service before the Service of the Lord's Day, and this has left some inconsistencies. These are, however, overcome if the Service of the Lord's Day is taken as the rule. The 'seasonal addition' for ordination on LB 515 is acceptable, though it was designed to fit another prayer: the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving with seasonal additions, in Holy Communion One (blue book, p. 15). The solution is to use the Uniting Church's own Great Prayer of Thanksgiving at LB 93ff and insert the 'special thanksgiving' for Ordination written for it on LB 101.

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

This again follows the form of the Service of the Lord's Day, but a special Dismissal is provided on LB 516.

To preside or not to preside?

Concern has been expressed about the appropriateness of a newly-ordained minister presiding at the sacrament at his/her 'own' ordination service. Certainly presbytery representatives should discuss the service with the ordinand so that particular requests (hymns, readings, suggestions for preacher and other participants) might be considered. The final responsibility for the content and the conduct of the service is, however, the presbytery's. It is the chairperson who has the responsibility of presiding, or, in the case of a lay chairperson, appointing someone to preside over the worship of the presbytery — on a rather demanding occasion. This is not to say that the newly-ordained should not assist in the distribution. The main point is to insist that ministry be seen as gift and service, not as right, and not as graduation prize. Ordination is a gift from God at the presbytery's hands. The ordinand who understands this will be glad to be in the position of receiver, until he/she is with those amongst whom he/she has been appointed to preach the Word and preside over the sacraments. That is the moment for giving.

A brief charge

We are not ordaining you to ministry:
that happened at your baptism.

We are not ordaining you to be a caring person:
you are already called to that.

We are not ordaining you to serve the church in committees,
activities, organisation:
that is already implied in your membership.

We are not ordaining you to become involved in social issues,
ecology, race, politics, revolution:
for that is laid upon every Christian.

We are ordaining you to something smaller and less spectacular:
to read and interpret those sacred stories of our community,
so that they speak a word to people today:
to remember and practise those rituals and rites of meaning
that in their poetry address human beings at the level
where change operates:
to foster in the community through word and sacrament that
encounter with truth which will set men and women free to
minister as the body of Christ.

We are ordaining you to the ministry of word and sacraments and
pastoral care.

God grant you grace not to betray but uphold it,
not to deny but affirm it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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INDUCTION OF A MINISTER OF THE WORD *PERSPECTIVES*

Induction in the Uniting Church does not carry the legal weight it does in some other Christian churches. In 'established' churches, such as the Church of England or the Church of Scotland, a minister is inducted in order that he/she legally enters into the rights and privileges of a benefice. For the Uniting Church, the service has rather more the flavour of a welcome or celebration of the beginning of a new ministry. The necessary 'legal' decisions have been made by the presbytery or, in a few cases, by synod or assembly. The use of the traditional term, however, perhaps suggests a solemn and formal service, so an encouragement to make it a joyful occasion is appropriate!

The 'flow' of the service is indicated by its major headings:

The Gathering of the People of God
The Service of the Word
The Service of Induction
The Response
The Sending Forth of the People of God

The pattern is close to that of the Service of the Lord's Day (without the Lord's Supper), and further material for this service may be gleaned there.

With the sacrament?

Note xliii promises a comment here.

When a presbytery ordains, the sacrament is usually celebrated. This is not primarily because the ordained ministry has to do with Word and sacrament, but because Word and sacrament are central to the church's life. The church (at the call of the presbytery) has gathered to continue the apostolic witness to Christ in the setting apart of ministers of the Word.

An induction is derivative of ordination. It is the beginning of a new ministry for those whom it ordained. There is no doubt that the eucharist would be appropriate, but other considerations may suggest that it is not necessary. An induction is, like an ordination, a presbytery occasion, but it is primarily the welcome of a parish to its new minister. The church is not meeting to do something new: it is continuing something already given. The context for that continuance is the ordinary life of the congregation, and there the sacrament finds its true place. (For the same reason, it is argued above that an ordinand should not preside at the sacrament at his/her ordination service: the ministry at that point is the presbytery's.) An induction will also be a significant occasion for the wider local community, and representatives of some churches, who will be present as guests, will not be free to enter fully into a celebration if it is eucharistic.

It may be argued that, as the church's characteristic way of making its joyful thanksgiving, the eucharist is the proper context for the beginning of a new ministry. However, there is the opposite danger of using the sacrament to mark every occasion in the church's life.

A printed order

The Induction Service does not appear in the *People's Book* so that presbyteries have freedom to adapt the order to local circumstances. A printed order, locally produced, is therefore implied. It should be modelled on other PB services; that is, it

COMMENTARY ON THE SERVICE

For a comment on liturgical dress and processions, see above, Ordination Service, The Gathering of the People of God.

1 WELCOME AND GREETING

The first paragraph echoes the custom of a previous tradition of constituting the presbytery for an induction or ordination. This is not required by the United Church's regulations. The decisions have been taken in presbytery for this service to occur. A crisper beginning would be simply: a Call to Worship; the greeting ('the grace') and the first hymn.

3 PRAYERS

As in the Service of the Lord's Day, if the opening hymn was of adoration and praise, there is no need to repeat the theme in the first prayer. There are alternatives to the prayer of confession at LB 580–590. If the congregation is to participate, this prayer or the responses will need to be printed on the service sheet.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

There is no reason in general why this section should not follow the order of The Service of the Lord's Day. The order suggests two readings only; the first from either the Old Testament or an epistle. Readers may need to be reminded of the words to be said before and after the reading, even if printed.

The preacher has the responsibility to preach the Word to the whole congregation, not only to give a charge to minister and people.

THE SERVICE OF INDUCTION

The Questions to the Minister are the equivalent of a Charge, a reminder to all of the solemn responsibilities and privileges of this ministry. They naturally lead into a rehearsal of the promises made at ordination.

An earlier custom was to take the minister on a tour of the church, chiefly of church furnishings. The Assembly Commission on Liturgy decided it was preferable to reverse this, and bring the central symbols to the minister. Nevertheless, it can prove complicated and needs careful planning and rehearsal.

10 HYMN

This could be an anthem: the theme in any case is invocation of the Holy Spirit for ministry.

11 INDUCTION PRAYER

The prayer echoes the confidence of the *Basis of Union*:

Since the Church lives by the power of the Word, she is assured that God, who has never left himself without witness to that Word, will, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, call and set apart members of the Church to be ministers of the Word. [from paragraph 14(a)]

THE RESPONSE

13 WELCOME BY THE PRESBYTERY

It is much to be hoped that members of presbytery (ministerial *and* lay) come to inductions in large numbers; this may mean that this part of the service takes a disproportionate amount of time. Perhaps a representative group could greet the minister at this point, and others offer a welcome at the peace or during supper.

Since the presbytery is responsible for inductions, and has oversight of the ministers and parishes, it is the appropriate body to give the first greeting.

14 QUESTIONS TO THE PEOPLE

This parallels section 9 above: both ministers and members have responsibilities in the church of God (see *Basis of Union*, paragraph 13).

15 WELCOME BY OTHER CHURCHES

The ecumenical representatives are not asked to make any public commitment; they are simply welcomed.

16 THE PEACE

Strictly speaking, since this is not a eucharist, any form of mutual greeting ('The Lord be with you') would be appropriate. (See the commentary on The Service of the Lord's Day.)

The series of welcomes may have taken some time, but it should have gradually built to a sense of fellowship in a common ministry, and thus lead well into the exchange of greetings.

17 RESPONSE BY THE MINISTER

There will doubtless be an opportunity for longer speeches at the supper which usually follows. The response here might simply acknowledge the welcomes given in the service.

Response also includes the offering of money, of musical gifts, and of prayerful concern for others. The prayer following the collection should be broader than simply dedicating the money-offering — perhaps a dedication of all present to their ministries, for example, LB 606 #9, 10, 14. A Thanksgiving such as LB 610 #2 or 612 #3, with responses, could be printed out for everyone's participation.

should show the major headings, other items, and the people's responses, preferably in distinctive type-fonts. Only those words which the people need for their participation need be printed. The names of participants may be recorded. Some presbyteries put a brief biography of the minister and family on the back page. [See the section on copyright for the appropriate acknowledgements on the service sheet.]

Presenting the symbols

The Bible which is brought should be the same one carried in procession into the church (if that custom is followed) or the one from which the readings were read earlier in the service. We are dealing at this point with symbols, and it is important that the Bible be seen to be the church's book and not a private possession. Similarly, the communion cup and plate ideally should be the ones regularly used in the congregation. Note the 'with bread and wine' of the rubric: bread and wine are the symbols of the Supper, not the vessels. And let there be plenty of water!

Some forethought should be given to where the offering plates are to be placed on the Table so that there is room for the bread and wine to stand centrally later on.

The rubrics explain the intended action. Awkward pauses will be avoided if the people making the presentations sit near the front of the church. If their words of presentation are not printed in the service sheet (and their inclusion would remind the congregation of the central meanings of the symbols), they should have them on a card — or better, learn them by heart so that their hands are free and they can look at the minister. Similarly, the minister should be free to respond.

Processions out are frequently less well organised than processions in. If at the beginning the minister sat in the pews until called forward for induction, perhaps the presbytery chairperson could invite him/her, with spouse and family, to lead the procession out. Other leaders and ecumenical guests should follow, with the members of presbytery (as hosts) bringing up the rear.

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The presbytery chairperson, who is the leader presiding over this service, gives the final charge to minister and congregation, and the blessing.

NON-PARISH INDUCTIONS

The Assembly or synods are responsible for the induction of ministries into settlements within their oversight. If the minister is ordained, the general nature of that ministry must be affirmed, though there may need to be some modification of the section where symbols are presented. The Ordination service makes it clear that the primary symbol of the Ministry of the Word is the Bible. All other symbols of ministry are derivative. A stole or scarf which has been designed to symbolise a particular ministry may serve here. A hospital chaplain may be given a container of oil, a traditional symbol of the healing ministry. The symbol of basin and towel is not confined to diaconal ministries. With imagination, the church should be able to discover and re-discover a range of symbols to express its faith at this point.

It may be useful to write special sections for insertion into #9, Questions to the Minister. In adapting the service for the induction of a lay person to the Chair of a Presbytery, one suggestion was:

In our baptism
we were all called to share in the baptism of Christ:
to die to ourselves and to rise to new life in him.
We are given the gift of the Holy Spirit
and made members of the body of Christ.
We are made ministers of the gospel
and Christ's faithful servants in the world.

The Uniting Church seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit
to recognise among her members
men and women called of God to preach the gospel,
to lead the people in worship,
to care for the flock,
to share in government
and to serve those in need in the world.

The presbytery exercises oversight of the congregations
within its bounds,
encouraging them to strengthen one another's faith
and to bear one another's burdens,
and exhorting them to fulfil their high calling
in Christ Jesus.

The Presbytery of . . . recognises God's gifts in you,
NN, and calls you to respond in joyful obedience,
serving them as Chairperson for the ensuing year.

The promises were slightly adapted from those on LB 530.

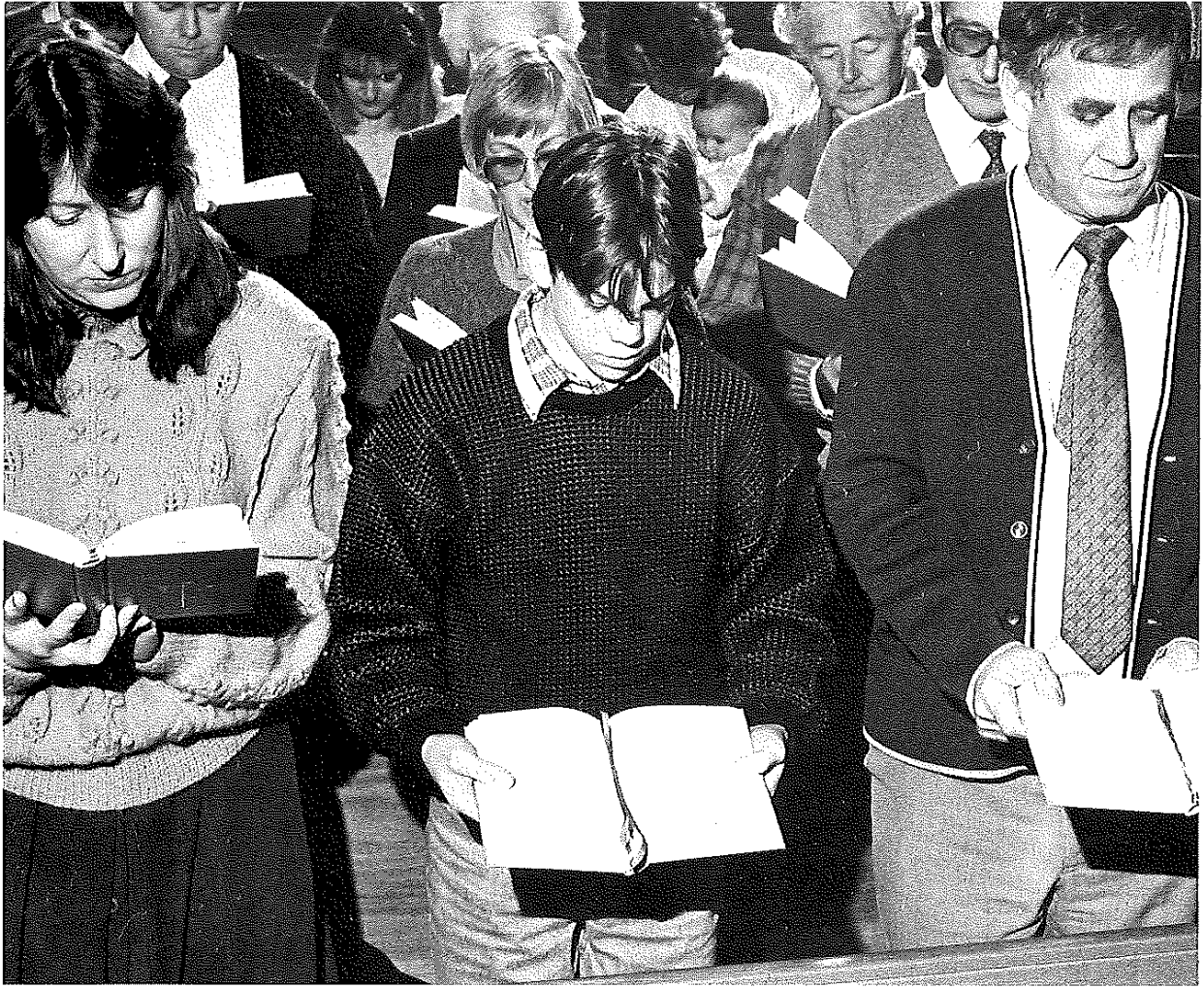


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