Receiving a Christian

into the Lutheran church

A person fifteen years or more of age who has already been properly baptized but has not previously belonged to any Lutheran fellowship can become a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church after receiving necessary instruction and confessing the faith of the church (Church Order, chapter 1, clause 3). If such a person has previously passed confirmation school, no further instruction is necessary. The order given here for a ceremony of receiving a new member into the church may also be applied in a situation where a person who has previously been a member of the Lutheran church is taken into the church again.

A pastor may choose to use this order when a baptized and sufficiently mature child less than fifteen years old is taken to be a member of the Lutheran church. General instructions concerning church membership of children are given in the introduction to the order for a baptism of a child.

The instruction given to a person who is joining the church and a ceremony following this order amount to a confirmation.

This ceremonial receiving of a Christian into the Lutheran church is done in a church or chapel or at home, as agreed upon by the pastor and other involved persons.

If the parson (leading pastor, kirkkoherra) of a congregation (parish) objects to having a person asking for membership joined to the church, the parson must take the matter to the parish council for a decision (Church Order, chapter 1, clause 3).

I Gathering

1. Hymn

Instead of a hymn, some other song or an instrumental prelude may be used.

2. Invocation and greeting

The invocation and greeting may be sung or said.

Invocation

P In the name of the Father, and of the B Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Greeting

P The Lord be with you.

C and with your spirit.

3. Introductory words

The pastor speaks in his/her own words or these words:

P NN, you want to confess your faith with us today and become a member of our church. We thank God for already having taken you to be his child when you were baptized. He is calling you to a life of believing in Jesus and loving your neighbors according to his will. Jesus says, “Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.” (John 6:37)

4. Psalm

Several alternatives are given below, but some other Psalm may be used instead, particularly a Psalm that follows the time of the church year.

The Psalm may be sung or said, concluded by “Glory to the Father...” (except during the last two weeks of Lent).

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

 Ps. 100

 OR

I lift up my eyes to the hills—

from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;

he who keeps you will not slumber.

He who keeps Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;

the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day,

nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;

he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in

from this time on and forevermore.

 Ps. 121

 OR

I will bless the Lord at all times;

his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast in the Lord;

let the humble hear and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me,

and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me,

and delivered me from all my fears.

Look to him, and be radiant;

so your faces shall never be ashamed.

 Ps. 34:1 – 5

Gloria Patri

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit

as it was in the beginning and is now and always,

from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

5. Prayer

The call to prayer may be followed by a short moment for silent prayer.

P Let us pray.

1. Our Savior Jesus Christ,

we thank you

for calling NN into the fellowship of your church.

Help him/her to always trust in you.

Let your Holy Spirit live in him/her,

so that he/she would grow as your child

and finally reach your glory to be with you forever.

Hear us, you who live and reign with the Father and Holy Spirit

always and forever.

2. Almighty God,

look graciously upon NN,

whom you have called into the fellowship of your church.

Strengthen him/her with your Holy Spirit.

Let him/her persevere as a disciple of Jesus Christ

and a member of your church.

Help him/her to serve you and those who are near.

This we pray in Jesus’ name.

C Amen.

II God’s Word

6. Scripture reading

One of the following passages is read. Other Bible verses suited to the occasion or the time of the church year may also be read.

The reader announces the passage to be read.

 Ephesians 2:19 – 20

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

 Titus 3:4 – 5

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

 Luke 15:20 – 24

So the younger son set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.

 John 6:37

Jesus says,

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.

 John 13:34 – 35

Jesus says,

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’

7. Hymn

Instead of a hymn, some other song or an instrumental prelude may be used.

8. Short homily

The pastor may read the model homily given below or speak in his/her own words. The pastor can deal with topics such as these:

– Being a child of God, the atoning work of Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit

– taking care of one’s spiritual life

– fellowship in the church

We have gathered before God because you, NN, want to join our church. We are happy for this decision. We want to welcome you just like a family member is welcomed home. A congregation of Christians is a family where different kinds of people live together, trusting in their heavenly Father. Everyone has a place and a task in this family. We are in a process of learning together to live according to God’s will. God calls us to believe in him and to love our neighbors—that is the calling of a Christian.

Christ has reconciled us with God. Faith in what Christ has done opens up a way for us to find forgiveness and a new beginning in life. NN, you are also entitled to partake of God’s grace day by day. The Holy Spirit is your guide, upholding you in the tasks you have in this world. Prayer is an opportunity for you to ask God for help and encouragement.

God’s family gathers for celebration in worship services. All members of the congregation are called to church to hear God’s word, to thank him and to pray to the heavenly Father. Jesus himself serves us at his holy supper and treats us with his grace. NN, you are welcome to take hold of these gifts to look for strength that you need in life. In this way the Christian faith upholds you until you reach our heavenly home.

III Joining the Lutheran fellowship

The one to be taken into the church may come to stand before the altar.

9. Question

P Do you want to join the fellowship of our church [and the Lutheran communion] by confessing the Christian faith that we share?

Answer:

I do.

\*10. Creed

The creed is said in unison.

The wording given here is used by Lutherans in North America. Other accepted versions may be used instead.

C I believe in God,

the Father almighty,

Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,

his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting.

\*11. Blessing

P You have expressed your desire to join our church, and you have confessed your faith.

 As a servant of God and his people I receive you, NN into the fellowship of our church in the name of the Father, and of the B Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The one who receives the blessing replies:

Amen.

The new member of the church kneels, and the pastor lays a hand on his/her head.

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C Amen.

12. Prayer of intercession

The prayer may also be formulated freely.

P Let us pray.

 Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we pray for NN who has become a member of our church. Encourage him/her to look for strength in your word and in holy communion. Help him/her to live as a Christian according to your will. Guide him/her every day and show him/her the way to take. Bless NN and his/her dear ones. Let our congregation be a home where he/she and all of us can grow together. Keep us as your children and take us finally to heaven to be with you. This we ask for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

13. Lord’s prayer

The Lord’s prayer is said in unison.

C Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and forever.

Amen.

IV Conclusion

14. Benediction

The benediction may be said or sung.

P The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

In the name of the Father, and of the B Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

15. Hymn

Instead of a hymn, some other song or an instrumental postlude may be used.