

THE SALTSHAKER

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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Officer Installation Vows

By Rev. Sean McCann

Does anybody read the fine print? Do we ever slow down to consider those endless clauses at the bottom of contracts, or do we mindlessly scroll by and click through as fast as possible? Despite the weight that Scripture places on our vows, I suspect that when it comes to the vows congregants take in the context of officer installations, we treat them like the fine print. Well today I hope to slow down a bit to consider what it is exactly that we are vowing! As you can see below, while the vows for the two occasions differ in significant ways, they overlap enough that we can summarize and consider them together in this final article on Oaths and Vows in the life of the church.

At the installation of ruling elders and deacons: *Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him?*

At the installation of ministers: *Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive [him] whom you have called to be your pastor?*

Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?

Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?

Do you engage to continue to him while he is your pastor that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for his comfort among you?

The following four verbs sum up the actions we commit to as members participating in these services.

Receive

We vow to “acknowledge and receive” our deacons and elders, and similarly vow during minister installations to profess our “readiness to receive” them. The key word found in both is “receive.” Paul uses this word often, teaching how the church should accept people: Titus (2 Cor 7:15), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Onesimus (Philemon 17), and even himself (Galatians 4:14). In these contexts Christians are to receive their leaders by “granting access” to them and “not refusing contact.” We are to receive leaders favorably; to welcome them as Christ has first welcomed us. One of the preliminary principles of Presbyterian church government (i.e., leadership by elders) states that: “the power to elect persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society” (Preface to the BCO). In other words, we have the unique privilege to choose our leaders, and what comes with that is our special duty to receive them.

Additionally, for teaching elders (ministers) there is another way that we receive them. The second vow is to “receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love.” The basis for this comes from Paul’s commendation of the Thessalonians: “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God.” (1 Thess 2:13) The infinite God speaks through his finite shepherds, and we exhibit our faith by receiving those words with meekness and love.

Honor

Both sets of vows include the idea of honor, and again, Paul is helpful as he writes of this honor: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” (1 Timothy 5:17) What does this double honor refer to? I take it to mean one type of honor for

September – October

Upcoming Events

For more information about any of these events, refer to our website (www.covenantreformed.net), or the church office (828-253-6578; office@covenantreformed.net).

The Lord’s Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

Morning Worship:

September 1, 15

October 6, 20

Evening Worship:

September 29

Youth

September 27— Back to School Game Night

Fall Picnic

October 6 at Black Mountain Home for Children (following morning worship)

Reformation Service

October 27

Weekly Events

Sunday:

Sunday School	9:30 am	
Morning Worship	10:45 am	
Evening Worship	6:00 pm	Except on 1st Sunday

Bible Study

For Men:

Men’s Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
ROMEOS (Retired Old Men Eating Out) at Cornerstone Restaurant	7:30 am	Every Thursday
Norm Bomer’s Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

For Women:

Gail Albee’s Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
Women’s Bible Study	10:30am	Thursdays

Watering Seeds Podcast

Be sure to check out our church’s weekly podcast, *Watering Seeds*. Each week our pastors review, discuss, and apply the previous Sunday’s sermon. You can find the podcast on any major podcast platform, such as Anchor, Spotify, or Apple Podcast, by searching for our church name or the title, “Watering Seeds,” or by scanning the following QR code:



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all those who lead and serve; and an additional type of honor for “those elders who are specially gifted, called and trained by God to preach” (BCO 7-2). The first honor is respectful attitude or disposition towards officers wherein we esteem them with the honor due to their office. And while all officers deserve this first honor, we recognize another “class” of elder called to full-time vocational ministry, and to these teaching elders is due the additional honor of material support. This second honor is defined in the final vow made by the congregation calling a minister as promising “competent worldly maintenance” or, “whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for his comfort among you.”

Encourage

Scripture instructs us to encourage one another, and that certainly includes members encouraging their leaders. We encourage with our words, and with our actions. Solomon tells us that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov 18:21), so we bring life when we speak words of gratitude and spur our leaders on towards good works. Add to our words the actions that encourage. We encourage deacons by volunteering to help them when they put a need forward; we encourage our ruling elders by answering their calls and welcoming them into our lives and homes so they can know and pray for us; and we encourage our pastors by attending services and receiving the word from them. A little goes a long way – how are you encouraging your leaders?

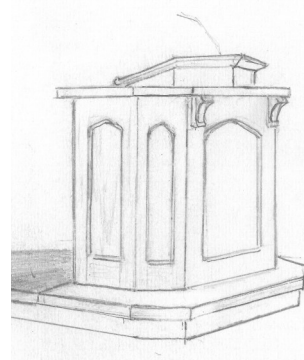
Submit

We read in Hebrews 17:13: “Obey your leaders and submit to them.” Why do we have to be told to submit? Because we don’t want to! And without the Holy Spirit, we never will. The bent of our sinful hearts is towards rebellion, not submission. But God has conquered our rebel hearts and submitted us to his rule, and he places us in temporary, earthly relationships under authority: in the home, in society, and in the church. In the church we are all under the spiritual care and oversight of leaders that God has ordained for us, and we submit to God by submitting to them. This idea is given a particular context in the second vow at a minister installation: “submit to him in the due exercise of discipline.” Church discipline is the faithful use of the keys to the kingdom that Christ has entrusted to his elders, or as the BCO defines it, “The exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare” (BCO 27-1). Discipline is never a fun topic, but it is one of the marks of the church and instituted for our good.

Have you paused long enough to stop scrolling? If so, then I hope you now know more of your duties as a church member and will happily embrace your vows and will aim – by God’s grace – to receive, honor, encourage, and submit to your leaders in the Lord.

The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Jim Curtis



As we wind down our Hebrews series in the evening, I wonder if I have convinced you yet of just how wonderful of a book it is? If not, let me give it one more chance.

It seems little needs to be said of Hebrews 11, where our Pastor gives examples of Old Testament saints to embolden our own faith. Indeed, Hebrews 11 is so famous, it often outshines the next chapter by a wide margin. So let me encourage you not to be distracted by the familiar in chapter eleven; move on swiftly to chapter twelve—this is where the payoff of the eleventh chapter is truly to be found. Here we meet the object of the faith described so vividly through the lens of Old Testament narratives. While Christians are encouraged to persevere in faith as the Old Testament saints did, the Pastor gives to us what they only “greeted from afar” (11:13)—Jesus Christ.

The Pastor does not wish to press endurance upon us for any other reason, and 12:1–2 provides crystal clarity to his purpose: the Old Testament saints endured such hardship and suffering *and they did not even know the Savior’s name*. How much more blessed, then, are we—and therefore, how much more able are we to endure? Not only because of Jesus’ example (making him the chief of the list of faithful saints!) but because of Jesus’ *work* with regards to our faith: he is its “founder and perfecter.” Rather than jumping into a triumphant celebration with the people, however, he continues on by talking about their discipline. As all of you who watched the Olympics know, endurance requires *discipline*. You do not make it through to the Olympics by being lazy! You certainly cannot win a medal that way. So how do we learn discipline? The Pastor reminds us that endurance comes from the discipline taught to us by those who love us.

This life abounds with difficulty, frustration, and angst. If we honestly reflect for a moment in our relationship with God, we have not really grown out of being moody teenagers, have we? So, God disciplines us, but as children whom he loves. He builds in us an endurance which will result in greeting Jesus not from afar, but face to face. This, friends, is the great beauty of Hebrews! Jesus is better than anything you can come up with, and what is the chief evidence? He perfects your faith in him, provides you with endurance, and will meet you with a smiling face in glory.

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
Sept. 1	Isaiah 50:4-51:8	
Sept. 8	Isaiah 51:9-52:12	Hebrews 12:3-13
Sept. 15	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	Hebrews 12:14-24
Sept. 22	Isaiah 54	Hebrews 12:25-29
Sept. 29	Isaiah 55	Hebrews 13:1-6
Oct. 6	Isaiah 56:1-8	
Oct. 13	Isaiah 56:9-57:13	Hebrews 13:7-19
Oct. 20	Isaiah 57:14-21	Hebrews 13:20-25
Oct. 27	Isaiah 58:1-59:13	TBD

Youth Ministry Internship Update

By Micaiah Liner

In the spring of 2021, I came to my first evening service at CRPC. At the time, I was just looking to hear good expository preaching. While I certainly got that, it did not take very long for me to realize I had found a church where people loved God’s word but also cared for each other deeply. I had no idea how dear this church would become to me and my (at the time) future family. In the summer of 2022, I became a member. In the spring of 2023, my wife Sara and I were married. In January of this year, we welcomed our daughter, Evelyn. There have been many changes for us in a relatively short period of time, but one of the constants has been the care we have received from the members of this congregation. Romans 12:9-10 comes to mind; *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* As I began my journey toward seminary early this year, I was overjoyed to learn that there was the opportunity to join CRPC as a Pastoral Intern with a Youth Ministry Focus—what a blessing to get to love and serve a congregation that has already loved and served my family so well. Here are a few things I am excited about as we approach this fall:

Wednesday Nights

Something I have always loved during our Wednesday evening gatherings is hearing the laughter from the youth room—sounds of life and joy. It is encouraging to know that our students have a safe place to build friendships and to grow in the Lord together. I am happy that I will get to play a part in this! We will continue to have a devotional, time of prayer, and then times for fun activities and games—or the occasional trip to get ice cream!

Getting to Know Students Better

I am looking forward to getting to know our students and their families better. Our youth group has a wide range of students in different grades—from those just entering 6th grade to those in their Senior year of high school. Each new season of a student’s life presents excitement and challenge. I am grateful my role will allow me more opportunities to learn what our students are excited about and be a voice of encouragement for them.

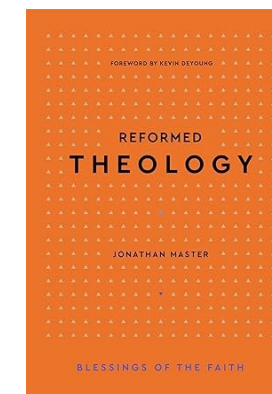
My First Semester of Seminary

This will be my first semester at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte! Our church has many connections to this campus, and it is a blessing to be attending a seminary that holds to the reformed tradition with integrity. I will be taking two classes this semester: *Intro to Pastoral and Theological Studies*, and *Hebrew I*. From what I have gleaned, learning the biblical languages can be challenging—I would particularly appreciate prayers that the Lord would add his blessing as I memorize new characters in a new alphabet.

Many of you have already provided a great deal of encouragement to me and my family in this new chapter. We are grateful that God in his wisdom and kindness has placed us here and are looking forward to much fruitful labor.

Book Review

By David Livernois



Small books on big subjects are important, as are big books on big subjects, and big books on small subjects. But, given the restrictions imposed by limited space, smaller books offer a unique benefit in their ability to distill and present what is most essential about their subject matter in a clear and concise manner I certainly found this to be the case in, “*Reformed Theology*” written by Dr. Jonathan Masters. While this book very well could be used as an introduction to

the subject, it is written in such a way that even those well versed in the Reformed tradition can certainly benefit from it. At only 103 pages, Dr. Masters presents an excellent summary of what many of us in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition can easily assume or take for granted. He begins by asking the question what is Reformed theology? Any of us who have tried to succinctly answer that question know the challenge of doing so.

Chapter one does this by examining what are known as the five *solas* of the Reformation, the centrality of covenant in God’s saving purposes, and the confessional nature of Reformed theology. He next discusses scripture and God’s sovereignty; the focus of chapter two. Here, he asks and answers the question, “is Reformed theology biblical?” Answering with a resounding “yes” Dr. Masters demonstrates that, rather than being a man-made system overlaid on top of scripture, Reformed theology is rooted in and derived from scripture itself as its foundation and final authority. Chapter three exclusively examines the covenantal structure of the Bible, the unifying theme of scripture from Genesis to Revelation revealing God’s redemptive purposes in Christ. Importantly, it demonstrates why the terms Reformed theology and covenant theology are often used interchangeably. The last chapter answers the “so what” question by beginning to unpack the blessings of Reformed theology. “Our contention here is that we can not only define and defend Reformed theology, but also embrace and celebrate it,” writes Dr. Masters. Personally, reading this book made me want to do both with renewed enthusiasm; I believe the same will be true for you.

Each of the four chapters ends with helpful reflection questions purposed to further engage with the main ideas therein. Additionally, the last part of the book impressively devotes almost 20 percent of its page count to a Q&A section addressing questions that may arise from reading the book, or are common critiques of its content. As a whole, this book will not only encourage the reader, but can also help equip him or her in sharing the beauty of Reformed theology with those yet to discover its riches. Look for it on our book table!