

END LESSON 31

ECCLESIASTICAL
FORMS AND BLANKS,

INCLUDING

LETTERS, MINUTES, CERTIFICATES, COUNCILS, CONVENTIONS,

AND

LICENSES.

Familiarize yourself with the following examples of various forms, licenses, minutes of meetings, etc., so you will know how to meet any needs you may have in your ministry for forms for various types of occasions.

FORMS AND BLANKS.

ECCLESIASTICAL FORMS and Blanks have no fixed or necessary wording. They will vary according to the customs of the churches, and the taste of those who prepare them. The following present substantially the forms in common use :

1. LETTER OF DISMISSION.

The _____ Church of _____

To the _____ Church of _____.

Dear Brethren :

This is to certify, that _____ is a member of this church in good and regular standing, and, at _____ own request, is hereby dismissed from us, for the purpose of uniting with you. When _____ shall have so united, _____ connection with us will cease. May the blessing of God rest on _____ and you.

Done by order of the Church.

New York, Nov. —, 18—.

_____, Clerk.

This Letter is valid for six months from date.

NOTE 1.—Letters are usually limited as to their validity ; more commonly to six months. This is to se-

cure their speedy use. If not used within that time, they can be renewed, at the discretion of the church.

NOTE 2.—It is customary to ask for a letter to some specified church, which is named in the letter given. But it may be given to “any church of the same faith and order,” when the member is uncertain as to what church it may be presented. Or if given for one church, it is equally valid if presented to another.

NOTE 3.—It is desirable that some church should be specified in the letter given; but this is not necessary, and a church has no right to refuse to give a letter because the member asking it does not specify some particular church.

NOTE 4.—When letters are granted, and members dismissed for the purpose of constituting a new church, that fact should be stated in the letters.

NOTE 5.—Members receiving letters do not cease their connection with the church, but continue under its watch and discipline, until they have actually united with another church.

2. LETTER OF COMMENDATION.

NEW YORK, Nov. —, 18—.

This certifies that _____ is a member in good standing, in the _____ church, in _____ and is hereby commended to the confidence, sympathy and fellowship of sister churches, wherever Providence may direct _____ course.

_____,
Pastor _____ Church.

NOTE.—This form of letter, sometimes called a letter of “Occasional Communion,” is for members during a temporary absence from home. It may be given by the pastor, or by the clerk, as authorized by the church. It should be returned to the pastor, or clerk, on the return of the member.

3. LETTER OF NOTIFICATION.

NEW YORK, Nov. —, 18—.

To the _____ Church.

Dear Brethren :

This certifies that _____ was received by letter from you, to membership in the _____ Church, Nov. — 18—.

_____, Ch. Clerk.

NOTE 1.—This form is by many churches sent with every letter of dismissal granted, and is to be filed by the clerk of the church receiving said member, and returned to the church which granted the letter, as a notification of reception.

NOTE 2.—The church granting letters does not drop the members dismissed until they have information of their having actually united elsewhere.

4. MINUTES OF CHURCH MEETING.

NEW YORK, Nov. —, 18—.

The Church held its regular meeting for business, this evening, at — o'clock.

The pastor was Moderator.

After singing, and reading the Scriptures, prayer was offered by _____.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

[Then follows a clear and faithful record of all business transacted.]

The meeting adjourned.

_____, Clerk.

NOTE 1.—The records of a church should show, not only the bare minutes of the business actually done, but a concise history of its progress, embracing all the important changes, incidents and events which constitute its material history.

NOTE 2.—All business should be taken up and transacted in an orderly manner. It is to be pursued under two general divisions.

1. Unfinished business: that which has come over from a previous meeting, and is presented by the minutes; embracing the reports of committees, and other items, in their order.

2. New business: such as may come up at the time, presented by the pastor, deacons, or other members.

5. CALL FOR AN ORDAINING COUNCIL.

• NEW YORK, Nov. —, 18—

The _____ Church of _____

To the _____ Church of _____.

Dear Brethren:

You are requested to send your pastor and two

brethren, to sit in council with us, Dec. —, at — o'clock P. M., to consider the propriety of setting apart to the work of the gospel ministry, our brother ————.

The Council will meet in ————.

The following churches are invited ————.

By order of the Church,
 ———— ————, Clerk.

NOTE 1.—The letters, by which the council is called, should be issued by the Church, and not by the candidate.

NOTE 2.—The candidate should be a member of the Church calling the council, as it would not be proper for a Church to call a council for the examination and ordination of one to whom they sustained no ecclesiastical relation.

NOTE 3.—Consequently, if a candidate accepts the call of a church to become its pastor, he should unite with that church before it calls a council for his ordination.

NOTE 4.—But if, for any reason, it should be thought desirable for the candidate to be ordained in the Church of which he was a member, and before his membership shall be transferred, it would be proper for the Church which had called him, to lay before his Church the facts, and request them to call a council for that purpose, in order that he might become their pastor.

NOTE 5.—It is not desirable that a man should receive ordination until some definite sphere of ministerial labor is open to him. One of the evidences of his divine call lies in the fact that his gifts are acceptable, and his services are demanded in some department of ministerial work.

6. CALL FOR A RECOGNIZING COUNCIL.

NEW YORK, Nov.—, 18—.

To the _____ Church in _____.

Dear Brethren :

In behalf of a company of believers in Christ, you are requested to send your pastor and two brethren, to meet in council at _____, Dec. —, at — o'clock P. M., to consider the propriety of recognizing said company of believers, as a regular and independent Church.

The Council will meet in _____.

The following churches are invited _____.

Affectionately yours,

_____, Com. or Clerk.

7. CALL FOR AN ADVISORY COUNCIL.

NEW YORK, Nov.—, 18—.

The _____ Church of _____

To the _____ Church of _____.

Dear Brethren :

You are requested to send your pastor and two brethren, to sit in council Dec. —, at — o'clock P. M., to advise concerning certain difficulties existing among us, which disturb our peace, and threaten serious consequences to the welfare of the Church.

The Council will be held in _____.

The following churches are invited _____.

By order of the Church,

_____, Clerk.

NOTE 1.—The letters by which a council is con-

vened are called *letters missive*, and constitute the warrant for the meeting of the body, and the charter under which it acts. These letters should if possible state distinctly and specifically the matters to be presented to the body when convened.

NOTE 2.—By common usage and general agreement, a council cannot take action on or investigate any subject, not embraced in the call by which it is convened.

NOTE 3.—A council may be called to give advice, not only in respect to difficulties, but with regard to any matter on which the Church may wish to be advised.

NOTE 4.—A council may be called either by a *church* or by *individuals*. A *mutual* council is one called by the mutual action and agreement of the different parties to a difficulty. An *ex parte* council is one called by one of the parties to a difficulty.

NOTE 5.—An *ex parte* council should not be called to adjust a difficulty, until all reasonable efforts have failed to secure a *mutual* council to which that difficulty may be referred.

8. MINUTES OF A COUNCIL.

NEW YORK, Nov. —, 18—.

An Ecclesiastical Council, called by the _____ church, convened in _____ this day, at — o'clock P. M.

Organized by choosing _____ Moderator,
and _____ Clerk.

Prayer was offered by _____.

The letter by which the Council was called, and the records of the church in reference thereto, were read, stating the object to be

The credentials of messengers were presented.

The following brethren were present from the following churches:—

<i>Brethren.</i>	<i>Churches.</i>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

[Then follows a faithful record of the proceedings.]

The Council dissolved, after prayer by _____

_____ _____, Moderator.

_____ _____, Clerk.

NOTE 1.—A true and faithful record of the proceedings of the body should be made by the Clerk, read, and approved by the body before adjournment, and signed by the Moderator and Clerk.

NOTE 2.—A copy of the minutes, duly certified and signed by the officers, should be furnished to the parties calling the Council.

9. MINUTES OF A COMMITTEE.

NEW YORK, Nov. —, 18—.

The _____ Committee met, at _____, at _____ o'clock P. M.

Present _____.

Brother _____ in the chair.

Prayer by _____.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

[Then follows a record of business.]

Adjourned.

_____, Secretary.

10. MINUTES OF A CONVENTION.

NEW YORK, Nov. —, 18—.

A Convention called to consider _____

_____ met in _____, at _____, at _____ o'clock P. M.

_____ was chosen Chairman, and _____ Secretary.

After prayer by _____, the Chairman stated the object of the meeting to be _____.

[Then follows a record of proceedings.]

The Convention then adjourned.

_____, Chairman.

_____, Secretary.

NOTE.—The rules for all meetings of deliberative bodies, whether churches, councils, conventions, or committees, are substantially the same. But every body has the right to form rules for itself, and regulate its own order of business. If a meeting adopts no rules, then it must be governed by the usual parliamentary order.

11. FORM OF LICENSE.

It is customary for churches to give a *license* to

those who are believed to have been divinely called to preach the gospel, but are not yet prepared to be ordained and enter fully upon the work of the ministry. A license, however, is not necessary, nor does it give any authority, or impart any qualification. It is simply a certificate of approval and commendation, by the church giving it.

The following form may be varied according to pleasure or circumstances:

LICENSE.

This certifies that Brother _____ is a member of the _____ church, in good and regular standing, and is held by us in high esteem. We believe him to have been called of God to the work of the gospel ministry, and do hereby give him our entire and cordial approbation in the improvement of his gifts, by preaching the gospel, as Providence may afford him opportunity. And we pray the great Head of the Church to endow him with all needful grace, and crown his labors with abundant success.

Done by order of the church, this day, Nov. —, 18—.

_____, Pastor.

_____, Clerk.

NOTE.—Licentiatees are not recognized by law, as regularly ordained clergymen, and are not therefore competent to solemnize marriages. Nor is it customary for them to administer the ordinances. But it is entirely proper for a church, in the absence of an ordained minister, to authorize a licentiate, or even a layman, to administer the ordinances for them. For them, though not for others.

12. CERTIFICATE OF ORDINATION.

This certifies that our Brother _____ was publicly set apart to the work of the gospel ministry, with prayer and the laying on of hands, by the authority of the _____ church, and according to the usages of our denomination, at _____, Nov. —, 18—.

That he was called to ordination by the _____ church, of which he was a member, and which, after full and sufficient opportunity to judge, were agreed in the opinion that he was called of God to the work of the ministry.

That _____ churches were represented in the council, by _____ ministers, and _____ laymen; and that after a full, fair and deliberate examination, being satisfied on all points, the council did unanimously recommend his ordination.

That our Brother _____ did accordingly receive the full, entire and hearty approval of the council in his officially entering upon the work of the ministry, preaching the Word, administering the ordinances, and performing all those duties, and enjoying all those privileges, to which a minister of Christ is called, and entitled.

And may the blessing of the great Head of the Church attend him, crown his labors with abundant success, and make him an honored instrument of good to Zion, and the World.

_____, Moderator.

_____, Clerk.

New York, Nov. —, 18—.