

CONFESSIONAL MATERIALS FOR SOLEMN ASSEMBLY'S EXTENDED EXAMINATION

You may also find other materials that will be helpful to you elsewhere on this cite and in the Book of Common Worship.

CALLS TO CONFESSION

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord.

“Though your sins be as scarlet,
I shall make them white as snow.”

Isaiah 1:18

OR

While we were yet helpless,
at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . .
God shows his love for us
in that while we were yet sinners
Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6,8

OR

God is in Christ reconciling the world to Godself,
not counting their trespasses against them.

2 Corinthians 5:19

OR

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross,
so that, free from sins, we might live in righteousness.

1 Peter 2:24

OR

God, who is rich in mercy,
out of the great love with which he loved us,
even when we were dead through our trespasses,
made us alive together with Christ –
by grace you have been saved.
Yes, by grace you have been saved through faith;
and this is not your own doing,
it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2: 4,5,8

AND

As people forgiven in Jesus Christ we have courage to be honest about our lives.
With confidence, let us confess our sin.

OR

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,
that we may receive mercy
and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

OR

In penitence and faith in the goodness of God who wants good things for us, let us confess our sins.

EXAMINATION OF INDIVIDUAL SINS

[In a long period of silence, call people to examine their lives before God. They may do this through journaling or working on a worksheet with a list of sins, such as the ones that follow.]

- *Here is a sample of a list of sins from a solemn assembly that was compiled by the preparatory team who had met in prayer for weeks before the larger gathering. You will want to go through the same preparatory process to compile your own list, but this one, taken and added to from HeartRest is a helpful start to you in compiling your own list for a bulletin insert. **You will want to add printed directions regarding what you want people to do with this list during your solemn assembly.***

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR LORD

Pride, self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, hard-heartedness
Worship: more performance than true devotion
Controlled by fear and anxiety rather than by faith
Holding back our money in fear of not having enough in the future
Too little time spent one-on-one with my Lord
Neglect of prayer, the Word, spiritual direction
Idolatry—gaining meaning from things instead of from God
Hypocrisy, in-authenticity
Joyless labor in God's house instead of joyful work by His side
Allowing the world to change us instead of our changing the world
Not giving God first consideration in all decisions
Slowness to acknowledge and confess my sins...

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER

Lack of love for each other; little true connection between us;
Demanding total agreement; allowing others to be demonized for holding different opinions
Judgmental spirit, lack of grace, rigidity, being overly demanding
Talking more than listening
Gossiping
Complaining
Not taking in what the other is saying and weighing it in Holy Spirit and instead reacting immediately against it

Leaders not bringing prophetic challenges to people ...

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

Lack of sacrificial service to the poor and oppressed

Separating ourselves from the world so that we don't see social problems that keep people oppressed and captive

Weak engagement with those who set social policies

Lack of passion for those who don't know Jesus; failure to build bridges of relationships through service

Failure to call others to live in accord with God's sovereign rule as characterized by love and justice and shalom for all

Lack of vision for the church in our city/region

Weakness in intercessory prayer for others and our ministries

Lack of equal respect for all cultures, and between each

Consumer mentality, allowing our possessions to own us instead of investing in Kingdom work

Laziness – "Let someone else do it."

Failure to live as good stewards of the earth and all God has provided for us to share with one another

Acceptance of and acquiescence to social sins that enslave and hurt others—pornography, slave labor practices, domestic violence, genocide, war, limiting access to food, housing, healthcare, etc.

Refusing to blow the whistle on social and personal sin so that others may know God's love for all ...

Personal reflections and confession:

- **LENTEN FORM FOR SELF-EXAMINATION¹**

People are invited to examine the following sins:

Pride—putting self in the place of god as the center and objective of our life. Pride is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures, dependent upon God.

Irreverence—deliberate neglect of God's worship, or contentment with a perfunctory participation in it. Manifest as cynicism toward the holy or as use of Christianity for personal advantage

Sentimentality—satisfaction with pious feelings and beautiful ceremony without striving for personal holiness

Distrust—refusal to recognize God's wisdom and love. Undue worry, anxiety, scrupulosity, or perfectionism. Attempts to gain or keep control of our life in various ways

Disobedience—rejection of God's known will. The refusal to learn God's nature through scripture. Breaking confidence by irresponsibility, treachery, and unnecessary disappointment of others. Breaking legal or moral contracts.

Impenitence—Refusal to search out and face up to our sins, or to confess them before God. Self-justification by believing our sins to be insignificant, natural, or inevitable; by refusing to apologize; by being unwilling to forgive ourselves.

¹ See Richard Lobs, III, in *The Services of the Christian Year*, vol. 5 of *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, Robert Webber, ed. Nashville: Star Song, 1994), 243-44. The author gives permission to adapt this form as needed by individual congregations. Some adaptation has occurred in this list.

Vanity—Failure to credit God and others for their part in our lives. Boasting, exaggeration, ostentatious behavior, undue concern over “things”

Arrogance—Being overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, obstinate

Resentment—Rejection of talents, abilities, or opportunities God and others give us.

Rebellion, hatred of God or human beings. Cynicism.

Envy—Dissatisfaction with our place in God’s order of creation. Manifests itself in jealousy, malice, and contempt for others or others’ things

Covetousness—the refusal to respect the integrity of other creatures, expressed in the accumulation of material things to prove self-worth, the use of others to personal advantage, or in the quest for status and power at the expense of others

Avarice—manifested in inordinate ambition or domination of others. The waste of natural resources or personal possessions. Extravagance or living beyond our means. Manifest in undue protection of our things. Stinginess, which can deprive others of life and thus kill them.

Gluttony—overindulgence of natural appetites for food and drink, and by inordinate quest for pleasure or comfort. Manifest in intemperance and lack of discipline

Lust—misuse of sex through seeing others as objects for our own pleasure without regard for their desires. Includes unchastity, immodesty, adultery, prudery.

Sloth—the refusal to respond to opportunities for growth, service, or sacrifice. Laziness in spiritual, mental, or physical duties. Neglect of family. Indifference to injustice or the world’s suffering. Neglecting the outcast or person in need.

As part of your preparation for a solemn assembly, we recommend that your prayer group spend time to come up with your own list of sins for self-examination.

Music

After an extended period of silent reflection, call everyone back together with the Choir singing “Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God” by Carl Mueller or the congregation singing “Change My Heart, O God” by Eddie Espinosa

Reading of Isaiah 58: 1-12

Naming of Societal Sins Ask for people to look at the scripture and describe aloud the sins the scripture mentions. Do a little teaching on the social nature of sin to help them see that we don’t just sin as individuals, but that we sin in the ways in which we structure our society and social norms.

LITANIES OF PENITENCE

- Read Psalm 51:1-17 responsively or intone it. If the choir sings this later, choose one of the other litanies.
- **Holy and merciful God,
we confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth,
that we have sinned by our own fault**

**in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have not listened to your call to serve as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ.

We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness:

The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

we confess to you, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways

and our exploitation of other people,

we confess to you, O God.

Our anger at our own frustration

and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

we confess to you, O God.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts,

and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

we confess to you, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship,

and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

we confess to you, O God.

Accept our repentance, O God,

for the wrongs we have done.

For our neglect of human need and suffering

and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

accept our repentance, O God.

For all false judgments,

for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors,

and for our prejudice and contempt

toward those who differ from us,

accept our repentance, O God.

For our waste and pollution of your creation

and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

accept our repentance, O God.

Restore us, O God,

and let your anger depart from us

Favorably hear us, O God,

for your mercy is great.²

² Presbyterian Church (USA), *Book of Common Worship*, pp. 225-26.

- **Beginning of the Great Litany:**

O God the Father, creator of heaven and earth,
Have mercy on us.

O God the Son, redeemer of the world,
Have mercy on us.

O God the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide,
Have mercy on us.

Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity,
three persons and one God,
Have mercy on us.

Remember not, Lord Christ, our offenses,
nor the offenses of our forebears.
Spare us, good Lord,

Spare your people whom you have redeemed with your precious blood.
Spare us, good Lord,

From all spiritual blindness;
from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy;
from envy, hatred, and malice;
and from all want of charity,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From all deadly sin;
and from the deceits of the world,
the flesh, and the devil,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism;
from hardness of heart,
and contempt for your Word and commandments,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From earthquake and tempest;
from drought, fire, and flood;
from civil strife and violence;
from war and murder;
and from dying suddenly and unprepared,
Good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of your holy incarnation,
by your baptism, fasting, and temptation;
and by your proclamation of the kingdom,
Good Lord, deliver us.

By your bloody sweat and bitter grief;
by your cross and suffering;
and by your precious death and burial,
Good Lord, deliver us.

By your mighty resurrection;
by your glorious ascension;
and by the coming of the Holy Spirit,
Good Lord, deliver us.

In our times of trouble;
in our times of prosperity;
in the hour of death,
and on the day of judgment,
Good Lord, deliver us.

SIN OFFERING

On 3 x 5 cards already present in the pews, have people write down 1-3 sins that they no longer wish to labor under that they'd like to cast upon Christ. Then have them offer them unto God. Have ushers bring these sin offerings forward and nail them to a cross or burn them. You may wish to play appropriate music during this time or let the silence of the symbol work its Spirit-work.

UNISON PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

**Gracious God,
our sins are too heavy to carry,
too real to hide,
and too deep to undo.
Forgive what our lips tremble to name,
what our hearts can no longer bear,
and what has become for us a consuming fire of judgment.
Set us free from a past we cannot change;
open us to a future in which we can be changed;
and grant us grace to grow in your likeness and image;
through Jesus Christ our lord. Amen.**

OR

**Almighty God,
you love us, but we have not loved you;
you call, but we have not listened.
We walk away from neighbors in need,
wrapped up in our own concerns.
We have gone along with evil, with pride, quarrelling, and divisiveness.
Holy God, help us to face up to ourselves,
so that, as you move toward us in mercy,
we may repent, turn to you, and receive mercy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

OR

Merciful God,

**in your gracious presence we confess our sin,
and the sin of our church.
Although Christ is among us as our peace,
we are a people divided against ourselves,
as we cling to the values of a broken world.
The fears and jealousies that we harbor
set Christian against Christian.
We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,
of intellect and reason,
and have turned them into bonds of oppression.
Lord,, have mercy upon us;
heal and forgive us.
Set us free to serve you in the world
as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ. Amen.**

OR

**Almighty God,
you poured your Spirit upon gathered disciples
creating bold tongues, open ears,
and a new community of faith.
We confess that we hold back the force of your Spirit among us.
We do not listen for your word of grace,
speak the good news of your love,
or live as a people made one in Christ
Have mercy on us, O God.
Transform our timid lives by the power of your Spirit,
and fill us with a flaming desire to be your faithful people,
doing your will for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

[If you are inviting people into a period of Lenten discipline, you may choose not to do a declaration of pardon until Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, at which time participation in Christ's passion shows us the cost of our forgiveness, a price God was willing to pay out of great divine love for us and for our salvation. If you choose this option, you will need to say this ahead of time in newsletters and bulletins, including the one that will serve for this service.]

In lieu of a declaration of pardon, you may simply offer the following prayer each week during Lent, starting with this service:]

PRAYER

May Almighty God, who of great mercy has promised to forgive all who truly repent and in true faith turn unto the Lord, strengthen you in all goodness and bring

you at last into the fullness of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.³

OR

May the God of mercy strengthen in you true repentance that you may avail
yourself of the fullness of divine grace and know the joy of God's salvation unto
eternal life, through Christ Jesus the Lord. **Amen.**

OR

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,
That we may show forth your glory in the world.
By the cross and passion of our Savior,
bring us with all your saints
to the joy of Christ's resurrection.⁴

If you are not in Lent, choose one of the following:

DECLARATION OF PARDON⁵

Hear the good news!
The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
He himself bore our sins
in his body on the cross,
that we might be dead to sin,
and alive to all that is good.
I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven.
Amen.

[1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Peter 2:24](#)

Hear the good news!
Who is in a position to condemn?
Only Christ,
and Christ died for us,
Christ rose for us,
Christ reigns in power for us,
Christ prays for us.

Anyone who is in Christ
is a new creation.
The old life has gone;
a new life has begun.

³ Based upon the *Book of Common Prayer*, Holy Eucharist I, p. 332.

⁴ *Book of Common Worship*

⁵ from PCUSA *Book of Common Worship* and LabOra.

Know that you are forgiven
and be at peace.

Amen.

[Rom. 8:34; 2 Cor. 5:17](#)

God, who is rich in mercy,
out of the great love with which God loved us,
even when we were dead through our sin,
made us alive together with Christ
and raised us up with him.

For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God.

Amen.

[Eph. 2:4, 5a, 6a, 8](#)

The mercy of the Lord
is from everlasting to everlasting.
I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven.

As God's own people,
be merciful in action,
kindly in heart, humble in mind.
Be always ready to forgive
as freely as God has forgiven you.
And, above everything else, be loving,
and never forget to be thankful
for what Christ has done for you.

[See Col. 3:12-14.](#)

Hear the good news of the gospel!
You are no longer strangers and aliens,
but members together of the household of God,
built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles,
with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.
In him the whole structure is joined together
and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
Christ himself is our peace;
in his flesh he has made us into one.

[See Eph. 2:19-21, 14.](#)

MUSIC OF PRAISE IN THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S GRACE