

Readmission

RCNZ

Readmission

Preliminary announcement

The following announcement is to be made to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the public readmission. If anyone has an objection, he is to bring it to the session in the time allocated.

Beloved in the Lord, some time ago _____ *name* was excommunicated from the church of Jesus Christ. It gives us great joy to announce that _____ *he/she* has repented of _____ *his/her* sin, and has requested to be readmitted to the communion of the saints. Unless one of you has a valid reason why this ought not to be done, we wish to inform you that on _____ *date* we shall receive _____ *him/her* again as a member of the church. We thank the Lord for his mercy shown to _____ *him/her* and pray that God will continue this work of grace in _____ *his/her* heart and life.

Afterwards, if no lawful objections are presented, the minister shall proceed to the readmission of the excommunicated sinner using the following form:

Form

Beloved Christians, we recently informed you of the repentance of _____ *name*, so that _____ *he/she* might be received again into the church of Christ. Having received no objections, it is with joy that we will now proceed with _____ *his/her* readmission.

Since God declares in his Word that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his way and live, the church always hopes for the restoration of the backslidden sinner, and is open to receive the penitent. The apostle Paul commanded that the man who had been excluded from the Corinthian church, and had then come to repentance, should be forgiven and comforted.¹ The Lord Jesus, who said, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in

heaven,” also assured us, “Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”² For this reason we are given authority to assure anyone who truly repents that _____ *he/she* is certainly received by God in grace, as Christ has said, “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven.”³

Our Lord Jesus told his disciples that “there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”⁴ He went on to say that “in the same way ... there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”⁵ _____ *name*, today we rejoice with the angels in heaven over your change of heart and life. It is with joy and thankfulness to God that we welcome you back into the fellowship of the church.

In order that you may be readmitted as a member of this church, please come forward and respond to three questions:

_____ *name*, do you declare with all your heart, here before God and his church, that you are sincerely sorry for the sin on account of which you were excluded from the church?

Secondly, do you also truly believe that the Lord has forgiven your sins for Christ’s sake?

And thirdly, do you therefore desire to be readmitted to the church of Christ, promising from now on to live a godly life according to the command of the Lord?

What is your answer?

Answer: With all my heart, I do.

Then the minister shall further say:

We, then, being assembled here in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, declare you, _____ *name*, to be released from the state of excommunication. We receive you again into the church of the Lord. We declare that you are now received into the communion of Christ. You may now partake of the sacraments. You now share in all

the spiritual blessings and benefits which God promises and gives to his church. May the eternal God preserve you to the end, through his one and only Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Therefore be assured in your heart, my beloved _____ *brother/sister*, that the Lord has received you in grace. Be diligent to guard yourself against the subtlety of Satan and the wickedness of the world. Love and serve Christ in gratitude for your salvation.

And you, beloved Christians, receive your _____ *brother/sister* with Christian love; be glad, for _____ *he/she* was dead and is alive again; _____ *he/she* was lost and is found; rejoice with the angels of heaven over this sinner who repents; regard _____ *him/her* no longer as a stranger, but as a fellow citizen with the saints and a member of the household of God.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Gracious God and Father, we thank you through Jesus Christ that you have heard our prayers. Where there was death you have given life; where there was rebellion you have given repentance; where there was mourning you have given joy! In your goodness and by the power of your Holy Spirit you have brought _____ *name* back to the fold of your people.

We pray that you will continue your work of grace in the heart of our _____ *brother/sister*. May _____ *he/she* become more and more assured of your grace, rejoice in his salvation, delight to serve you and walk in your ways to the end. May we learn from this example that with you there is forgiveness and therefore you are feared. May all of us serve you with childlike fear and obedience all the days of our life, until we receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray:

Version A

Version B

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is
in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
And lead us not into
temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

¹ 2 Corinthians 2:5ff.

² Matthew 16:19.

³ John 20:23.

⁴ Luke 15:7.

⁵ Luke 15:10.