A Liturgy for the Dissolution of a Ministry

To be led by the Synod/Classis

VOTUM

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
People: Amen.

SENTENCES

Leader: For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.
People: We stand now in the season of uprooting.
Leader: A time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.
People: We bring our grief and our gratitude, laying them down together.

(A moment of silent reflection)

DECLARATION OF INTENT

Leader: We are gathered by the **synod/classis** to celebrate the life of this ministry, to give thanks to God for the gifts that have come to us and to others through this work, and to acknowledge our sadness at its close.
People: We affirm again our faith in Jesus Christ, the only head of the Church.
Leader: The service today marks a passage. A ministry is coming to a close; yet in the economy of God, something new is always being born. This **synod/classis** acknowledges that while congregations are formed and disbanded, the Lord our God reigns forever.

HYMN OF ADORATION *(ideas listed below)*

The Confession and Assurance

CALL TO CONFESSION

Leader: Let us humble ourselves before God, forsaking all that separates us from God and neighbor. Let us think not only of personal evil but also of our communal sins—of family, class, race, and nation—that we may receive mercy and become for each other ministers of grace.

CONFESSION OF SIN AND LAMENT

Leader: Merciful God,

ALL: we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone as a synod/classis. We have not loved you with our whole heart in our ministry together; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves in our time together. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be as we transition to middle assemblies.

Leader: O God who gathers and God who scatters,

ALL: We come to you at the closing/ending of this synod/classis. We know that much has happened to bring us to this point in our denomination, and our synod, and our classis. There have been many difficult conversations, and many mournful goodbyes. We acknowledge, O Lord, that this ending is not merely a change of seasons, but a casualty of our own doing. We have wounded one another in our inability to consider another point of view; We have let pride stand where grace was invited and love was necessary. We have traded our shared vision for unity and kingdom work for the sharp edges of resentment, and it has cost us.
Forgive us for the words that acted as swords, And for the silence that acted as a wall.

A moment of silence for reflection

Leader: God of all seasons,

ALL: We grieve the good things that began in this synod/classis, the partnerships, the care for each other. We grieve the geographic closeness we were able to share, the care we could give each other.
Yet, even in the dismantling, do not leave us to our bitterness. As this organization dissolves, let not our souls dissolve into malice. Sever the ties that bind us to this failure, but knit together the pieces of our individual peace.
Lead us out by different paths. In this season, by your grace, allow us to begin again. Give us your vision, Lord, this is our prayer. Help us to see when the way is not clear. You are the God who makes all things new, even when we have made things old and broken. We yield this ending to you. Take the fragments of our failure and use them as the soil for some future, humbler growth.
Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Leader: Hear the good news! If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

HYMN OF REFLECTION *(optional transition moment here)*

The Proclamation of the Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READING

SERMON

The Thanksgiving for Ministry

COMMUNION

Communion may be served here together. See "Worship the Lord" for the communion liturgy.

Leader: We come together this evening as the body of Christ, sharing a meal together as we transition to a new ministry season. We feast together in remembrance, communion, and hope.

Transition to communion liturgy here. Song ideas for communion are listed below.

A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE

Leader: Throughout the years, God has blessed this work, using the gifts of pastors and members to bring healing in the name of Christ.
People: We celebrate the spark that began this flame.
Leader: We remember the long days: the perseverance through lean years and the quiet satisfaction of a job well done.
People: We thank you for the strength.

(Here may follow brief testimonials or the sharing of mementos)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Leader: How can we thank you, O God, for the ministry of this body over these past years? For every prayer uttered here, and for all the ways in which you have guided these your people, we give you thanks and praise!

All: (Singing) Praise God from whom all blessings flow...

The Sending

Leader: Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: *"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*
People: Gently untie our identities from our titles. Remind us that we are more than the work of our hands.

CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

Leader: Therefore, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering.
People: For he who has promised is faithful.
Leader: Beloved, the church is not this synod or classis, it is all of us together. We go from this place to new beginnings, new gatherings, and new assemblies, where we may be encouraged and where we encourage others.
People: We go out not in defeat, but in a holy transition.

HYMN OF DISMISSAL *(see options below)*

BENEDICTION

Leader: Now, may the skills you honed here serve as tools in new gardens. May the lessons learned here be wisdom for your journey. Go now; the office may close, but the light you carried here is yours to keep. Carry it into the next dark place. **Amen.**

SONG SUGGESTIONS:
From Lift Up Your Hearts
Blessed Be Your Name – LUYH 343
God of our Life – LUYH 404
Healer of our Every Ill - LUYH 303
How Firm A Foundation – LUYH 427
My Life Flows On in Endless Song – LUYH 443
O God, our help in Ages Past - LUYH 405
Pues si vivimos/ When We Are Living – LUYH 452
Shepherd Me, O God – LUYH 456
Ten Thousand Reasons – LUYH 559

From Other Sources
Do With it What You Will – The Porter's Gate
Eternal Weight of Glory – Wendell Kimbrough
Give Us Your Vision - Handt Hanson, tune Be Thou My Vision
In the Valley (Bless the Lord) – CityAlight & Sandra McCracken
Psalm 126 – Bifrost Arts
The Goodness of the Lord – Wendell Kimbrough
Wisdom and Grace – Bifrost Arts
You Hold it All – The Porter's Gate
Your Labor is not in Vain – The Porter's Gate