

Officer Training



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Resources Provided—with many thanks—by:

The Rev. Eneyas Freitas: Scripture, Theology and Session Overview

The Rev. Mary Saylor: Deacons Overview

Ruling Elder Bob Schulz: Robert's Rules of Order

Ruling Elder Paul Rooker: Financial Best Practices

Board of Pensions: Clergy Terms of Call

Ruling Elder Molly Winkler: HR Best Practices

Session One: Scripture¹

Elders in the Scriptures

Church Elders are mentioned in 13 different passages or verses in the New Testament. In addition, there are 125 references to Elders in the Old Testament, who participated in the government of the people of Israel.

Age and maturity were among the characteristics that qualified Elders to exercise authority. The Greek word for Elder, used in the New Testament, is 'Presbyteros.' It is from this root that the name Presbyterian comes, meaning a Church governed by Elders according to the Biblical pattern.

Elders participated with the apostles in the government of the very first Church in Jerusalem as indicated by Acts 11:30, 15:2-5, 16:4 and 21:18. The apostolic missionaries, such as Paul and Barnabas, appointed Elders to govern the congregations they founded in other sites, as indicated by Acts 1:23 and Titus 1:5. The apostles Peter and John also referred to themselves as Elders (I Peter 5:1, II John 1 and 11, 1 John 1).

It is evident from Titus 1:5-9 that Elders were also called Bishops. The Greek word for bishop, 'episkopos', simply means overseer or supervisor and describes the function of elders in the Church. Bishop later came to refer to a single individual who served as overseer of all the Christian churches in a large city or a district. In the New Testament Church, however, the words "elder" and "bishop" were used interchangeably to refer to the same office.

Other qualifications for Elders are given in I *Timothy 3:1-7* and *Titus 1:5-9*.

The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way-- for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not 4 accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

Still other duties and functions of Church Elders are mentioned in several places in the New Testament such as: *Acts 20:28-31* and *I Peter 5:1-3*:

Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore, watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

¹This section adapted from Eneyas Frietas, *Officer Training*, Urban Connect Presbyterian Church, Phoenix, AZ, October 2015. Used with permission.

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed; Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Deacons in the Scriptures

The title “deacon” (*diakonia*) comes from the Greek word for “servant” or “slave”—literally, “one who waits tables.” This underscores the deacon’s role as servant, as found in Acts 6:1-7:

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

The expectations of a Deacon in terms of character and qualification are similar to that of an elder. Paul writes in 1Timothy 3:8-13:

Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.



Nine Words

Have each elder write a definition of an elder and a definition of a deacon. Each definition can use no more than nine words. Share answers in triads, then have each triad share their favorite definition with the whole group.

Elder:

Deacon:

Session Two: Foundations

F-1.01 God's Mission

The Book of Order begins with the reminder that God has a mission and, therefore, God calls the Church.

The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God's mission. (F-1.01)

F-1.02 Jesus Christ is Head of the Church

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church., and "The Church's life and mission are a joyful participation in Christ's ongoing life and work." (F-1.0201) "Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills." (F-1.0202) The Book of Order continues by describing three gifts Christ gives to the Church that are foundational if the Church is to fulfill its calling to participate in God's mission:

- Christ gives the Church its life (F-1.0203)
- Christ is the Church's hope (F-1.0204)
- Christ is the Foundation of the Church (F-1.0205)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE – Choose one or two of the corner exercises, depending on the amount of time allotted for training. You may want to use the other exercises during the year as a part of ongoing Session training.

F-1.03 The Calling of the Church

F-1.0301 The Church is the Body of Christ

- The Church is to be a **community of faith**, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.
- The Church is to be a **community of hope**, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. This new creation is a new beginning for human life and for all things. The Church lives in the present on the strength of that promised new creation.
- The Church is to be a **community of love**, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down.
- The Church is to be a **community of witness**, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God's transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord.



Corners Exercise

Designate a corner of the room for each of the above, four, community of...descriptions. Have each elder choose the description they believe is the most significant form the Church's community takes and gather in that corner. Have each group discuss among themselves why they chose to stand where they have, and then share a consensus answer with the other groups.

Using the same corners for the same designation, repeat the exercise with the following modification:

- have each elder choose the description that believe best describes your congregation.
- have each elder choose the description they believe least describes your congregation.

The Church is described historically by the four marks used in the Nicene Creed:

- The Church is **one** – it shares a spiritual unity that transcends dogmatic and denominational affiliation.
- The Church is **holy** – it is set apart from the world and set apart for God.
- The Church is **catholic** – it is universal and includes all people, from all places, from every age who are claimed by God through Jesus Christ.
- The Church is **apostolic** – it is sent into the world to proclaim in word and deed the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.



Corners Exercise

Designate a corner of the room for each of the above, four marks of the Church. Have each elder choose the description they believe is the most significant “mark” of the Church and gather in that corner. Have each group discuss among themselves why they chose to stand where they have, and then share a consensus answer with the other groups.

Using the same corners for the same designation, repeat the exercise with the following modification:

- have each elder choose the description that believe best describes your congregation.
- have each elder choose the description they believe least describes your congregation.

The great ends of the Church are:

- the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
- the maintenance of divine worship;
- the preservation of the truth;
- the promotion of social righteousness; and
- the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.



Corners Exercise

Designate six areas of the room for each of the above, six, great ends of the Church. Have each elder rank the ends 1 – 6 from most significant (#1) to least significant (#6). Have each elder gather in the six areas as follows:

- Their #1 choice
- Their #6 choice

Have each group discuss among themselves why they chose to stand where they have, and then share a consensus answer with the other groups.

Repeat the exercise according to the following modification: rank which of the six ends at which your congregation is most faithful (#1) and least faithful (#6).

F-1.04 Openness to the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

The Presbyterian Church is led by Jesus Christ, guided by Scripture, and seeks to follow where the Holy Spirit is leading according to the rubric “the Church Reformed, Always Reforming according to the Word of God.” The Presbyterian Church, therefore, seeks to be respectful of our ecumenical partners and affirming of the different ways Christians affirm the Lordship of Jesus Christ – there is unity in our diversity of faith. Led by the aforementioned rubric, the Church seeks reform and fresh direction:

- a new openness to the sovereign activity of God in the Church and in the world, to a more radical obedience to Christ, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work;
- a new openness in its own membership, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, ethnicities, and worldly conditions, made one in Christ by the power of the Spirit, as a visible sign of the new humanity;
- a new openness to see both the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God’s activity in the world; and
- a new openness to God’s continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be more effective in its mission.



Corners Exercise

Designate a corner of the room for each of the above, four depictions of the ways the Church is open to the Spirit’s leading. Have each elder choose the description they believe is the most significant and gather in that corner. Have each group discuss among themselves why they chose to stand where they have, and then share a consensus answer with the other groups.

Using the same corners for the same designation, repeat the exercise with the following modification:

- have each elder choose the description that believe best describes your congregation.
- have each elder choose the description they believe least describes your congregation.

Session Three: Theology²

Confessing our faith means stating the things we most essentially believe. In order to become a member, we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Elders and Deacons take on a particular responsibility. Amongst the Constitutional Questions, officers are asked, “Do u accept the ‘Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith.’” What does that mean?

The essential tenets are our foundational convictions, contained in our creeds and confessions, which bear witness to God’s grace in Jesus Christ. They guide the church in its study and interpretation of the Scriptures; they summarize the essence of Christian tradition; they direct the church in maintaining sound doctrines; they equip the church 21 for its work of proclamation. Jack Rogers defines essential tenets as,

An essential, or confessional standard, is a core belief that already has the assent of the overwhelming majority of the community. Essentials are not things that we are fighting over, but things over which we no longer fight.

The Reformed Faith

The term “Reformed Faith” is a technical one that describes religious movements that have their roots in history and geography. In Germany - the Lutheran church. In England, the Anglican Church. In Switzerland, the Reformed. We have a family heritage we seek to affirm.

There are many different viewpoints in our tradition. Luther’s principle was; “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. If scripture doesn’t forbid something, then it’s O.K to do it.” Calvin on the other hand felt that faith should “Only include those things scripture explicitly demands.” The Book of Confessions covers a variety of views!

We don’t have to cross every ‘t’ and dot every ‘i’... our calling is to know what the essential tenets are. Problem is... where do we find those? We find help in our Book of Order section titled “The Church and it’s Confessions” (Foundation). This helps us answer question such as ‘What makes us ‘catholic’? What makes us ‘Protestant’? What makes us ‘Reformed?’

Doctrines We Deem to be Essential

Historic, Catholic (as in “universal”) Beliefs

1. The mystery of the **Trinity**
2. The **Incarnation** of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ

All Christians believe in God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as this is the way scripture has revealed God to us. God has come in a person, and that person is Jesus Christ who teaches us that we are not alone! In-carn-ation = In the Flesh, (or, in Spanish: Dios – con – carne).

Protestant Beliefs

3. Salvation is by **Grace alone** through **Faith alone**³
4. **Scripture** as the final authority for salvation and the life of faith
5. **Priesthood of all believers**

² This section adapted from Eneyas Freitas, *ibid.*, and taken originally from Jack Rogers, *Essential Tenets*. (<https://www.drjackrogers.com/2008/06/a-quick-guide-to-essential-tenets.html>), accessed 2.26.2019.

³ One may wish to affirm all five of the so-called “solas”: Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, (to God’s) glory alone.

We have benefited from the insights of the 16th Century reformation. We cannot earn our salvation through works, but God offers us salvation in Jesus Christ. Scripture is our authority in all matters relating to salvation, how to be right with God and each other, and how to live the Christian life. God calls all Christians to a life of service through the Church for the sake of the world.

Reformed Beliefs

6. God's **Sovereignty**
7. God's **Election** of people for salvation and service
8. **Covenant** life of the church, ordering itself by the Word of God
9. Faithful **Stewardship** of God's creation
10. The **Sin** of **idolatry**
11. **Seeking Justice** and living in **Obedience** to the Word of God

Sovereignty indicates the belief that ultimately God is in charge.

Election indicates that it is God who has chosen us. God has reached out to us. In an election booth you choose whom you want to govern you, so God has chosen us to 'govern' His world. God initiates, we respond.

Covenant is the idea that God has taken the people He has called together and drawn them together as a community. Just as we don't choose our relatives, we don't choose who is part of the church. We covenant with them to be the people of God by following the directions God has given us in Scripture.

Stewardship isn't all about money. Stewardship means that we exercise our responsibility to care for one another and the world in which God has placed us.

The **Sin of Idolatry** can be defined as an "Ultimate commitment to any idea, person thing other than the ultimate God who is alone worthy of that final all-embracing commitment." We try to avoid that!

Seeking justice and living in **obedience** to God's Word. Our task is not to be successful, but faithful. We seek to transform society into the way we believe God would like it to be.

This Top 10 list is a good place to start! It's not all embracing but it provides a guide as to what to concentrate upon. Why do we need to know these things? Through our confessional statements our church declares to the world:

- Our Identity - Who and What we are.
- Our Convictions - What we believe.
- Our Mission - What we resolve to do.

The Book of Confessions⁴

The Confessions are a kind of *Cliff Notes* to the Scriptures. They show us how historically the Church has understood the faith. They direct us towards actions that we can take in line with that understanding.

- Guide the church in its study and interpretation of Scripture
- Summarize the essence of Christian tradition
- Direct the Church in maintaining Sound Doctrine

⁴ See Appendix A for an overview of the Book of Confessions.

- Equip the church for the work of proclamation.

F-2.02: The Confessions are Subordinate Documents

The confessions are standards subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God as the Scriptures bear witness to Him. Whilst subordinate, they are nonetheless standards. Confessions are not changed. We can write new ones, but it would take a decade at least to get them in the Book of Confessions. Why? Because we believe the confessions that we have are “**authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do.**” That’s why we ask elders and deacons to sincerely receive and adopt these confessions. Are you willing to follow the guidance the church has given in the past as to what the main things in scripture are that we should be paying attention to? Such are the **essential tenets** to which you are asked to assent.

We believe that we have “**latitude within limits**” and “**freedom within form.**” Rather than a “**strict subscriptionism**” in which one’s conscience is bound to a particular articulation of theology, our Confessions provide margins. We cannot act decisively till we know what our focus should be. The metaphor of a compass is apt: the Confessions may not give us precise, GPS coordinates, but they do point us in the direction of Jesus Christ.

We are “**Reformed and always Reforming according to the Word of God,**” or at least “always willing to be reformed.” The Confessions do not lock us in. They can be alluding to the word of God and should the Spirit of God cause us to see things we have missed, then we are called to act upon those things.



Think, Pair, Share

Have each elder ponder for two minutes on the following question:

- How are the Reformed beliefs listed above expressed in the life of our church’s worship, mission, discipleship formation, fellowship and care?

After two minutes, have elders share one-to-one their observation with another elder, and then share perspectives with the entire group.

- Are there any of the beliefs listed above to which you would like the pastor to speak or offer clarity?

Session Four: Historic Principles

F-3.01 HISTORIC PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH ORDER

In setting forth this Book of Order, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms the historic principles of church order, which have been a part of our common heritage and which are basic to our Presbyterian concept and system of church government, namely:

F-3.0101 God Is Lord of the Conscience

a. That “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of humankind which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.”³

b. Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable: We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time, be equal and common to all others.

F-3.0102 Corporate Judgment

That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

F-3.0103 Officers

That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers,⁴ not only to preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God.

F-3.0104 Truth and Goodness

That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Savior’s rule, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” And that no opinion can either be more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level and represents it as of no consequence what a man’s opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.

F-3.0105 Mutual Forbearance

That, while under the conviction of the above principle we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.

F-3.0106 Election by the People

That though the character, qualifications, and authority of Church officers are laid down in the Holy Scriptures, as well as the proper method of their investiture and institution, yet the election of the persons to the exercise of this authority, in any particular society, is in that society.

F-3.0107 Church Power

That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

F-3.0108 The Value of Ecclesiastical Discipline

Lastly, that if the preceding scriptural and rational principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigor and strictness of its discipline will contribute to the glory and happiness of any church. Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church universal.

F-3.02 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms, within the context of its commitment to the Church universal, a special commitment to basic principles of Presbyterian polity:

F-3.0201 One Church

The particular congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wherever they are, taken collectively, constitute one church, called the church.

F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters

This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament). Ruling elders are so named not because they “lord it over” the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and guide in its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall be committed in all their work to teaching the faith in word and in deed and equipping the people of God for their ministry and witness.

F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils

These presbyters shall come together in councils in regular gradation. These councils are sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. All councils of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The councils are distinct but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate council. The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller.

F-3.0204 Seek and Represent the Will of Christ

Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ.

F-3.0205 Decision by Majority Vote

Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern.

F-3.0206 Review and Control

A higher council shall have the right of review and control over a lower one and shall have power to determine matters of controversy upon reference, complaint, or appeal.

F-3.0207 Ordination by Council

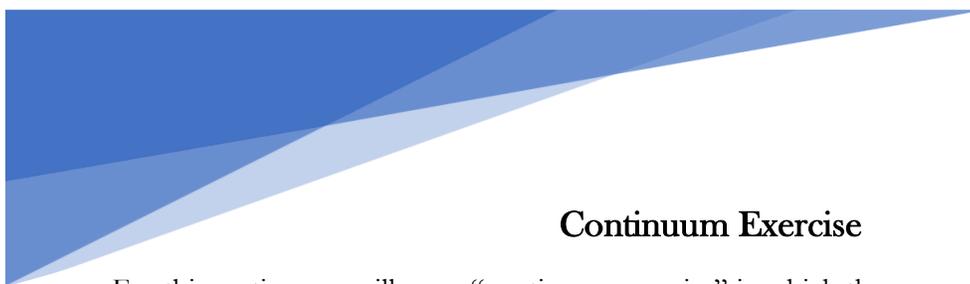
Presbyters (ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament) and deacons are ordained only by the authority of a council.

F-3.0208 Shared Power, Exercised Jointly

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is a shared power, to be exercised jointly by presbyters gathered in councils.

F-3.0209 General Authority of Councils

Councils possess whatever administrative authority is necessary to give effect to duties and powers assigned by the Constitution of the church. The jurisdiction of each council is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution, with powers not mentioned being reserved to the presbyteries.



For this section, we will use a “continuum exercise” in which the room will be divided into two sections. For each couplet, one wall will be designated 100% A and the opposite wall designated 100% B. Elders are given two concepts to evaluate (e.g. God alone is Lord of the conscience versus the primacy of corporate judgment) and asked to rate their relative importance along the continuum. Elders are invited to stand along the continuum according to the relative value of one’s strength of conviction that one of the historic principles is more or less important than the other (closer to one wall, farther from the other wall).

After each elder has chosen a place to stand, have several elders explain why they chose where they did.

Here are some couplets to get started (but feel free to add more):

- God alone is Lord of the conscience versus the primacy of corporate judgement
- Seek to represent the will of Christ versus decision by majority vote
- The importance of truth and goodness versus the need for mutual forbearance
- That church power is ministerial (how faithfully we serve) versus church power is declarative (how faithfully we speak)
- That authority is shared by ministers and elders versus officers are elected by the people

Session Five: Session Duties

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as defined in F-3.04, consists of the Book of Confessions (Part I) and the Book of Order (Part II). The Book of Order contains the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline. In this Book of Order

- (1) SHALL and IS TO BE/ARE TO BE signify practice that is mandated,
- (2) SHOULD signifies practice that is strongly recommended,
- (3) IS APPROPRIATE signifies practice that is commended as suitable,
- (4) MAY signifies practice that is permissible but not required.



FAQs Game

Divide the group into two teams. Have everyone covenant not to peek at the answers on the next page. Take turns allowing each team the opportunity to answer one of the FAQs listed below. If a team answers incorrectly, the other team is allowed to answer. One point is awarded for each correct answer. The team with the youngest member goes first.

Frequently Asked (Polity) Questions

- Who can call a congregational meeting?
- Who can call a Session meeting?
- Who can moderate a meeting?
- Who counts the offering and handles money?
- Who approves the terms of call for a pastor?
- Who approves the annual budget?
- Are Session meetings open?
- Who elects officers?
- Who has the right to buy, sell or encumber the church's real property?
- What is the difference between a "committee" and "commission"?
- What is the rule of thumb about the division of labor between the congregation, pastor, and Session?
- Who authorizes communion to be served and a baptism to be celebrated?

- **What is the division of labor between pastor and Session in planning worship?**

- **Who can call a congregational meeting?** The Session calls for congregational meetings, or the Presbytery can direct the Session to call a meeting if the situation requires it.
- **Who can call a Session meeting?** The moderator of the Session (usually the pastor) calls for the Session meeting and must call a meeting in a timely manner if requested in writing by at least two elders.
- **Who can moderate a meeting?** The pastor moderates the meeting. If unavailable, she or he can request another minister member of Presbytery to moderate or have an installed elder from the Session moderate.
- **Who counts the offering and handles money?** All offerings shall be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person; financial books shall be open to inspection; and periodic, and in no case less than annual reports shall be made to the Session. (G-3.0205)
- **Who approves the terms of call for a pastor?** The congregation approved the pastors' terms of call, which also must be affirmed by the Presbytery (through the Commission of Ministry).
- **Who approves the annual budget?** The Session approves the budget, though many Session find it wise to share the budget with the congregation as a matter of open communication.
- **Are Session meetings open?** All meetings of the PCUSA are open except for personnel matters, in which case councils are allowed and encouraged to meet in executive session.
- **Who elects officers?** All officers (ministers, elders and deacons) are elected by the congregation.
- **Who has the right to buy, sell or encumber the church's real property?** Only the congregation has the right to approve the purchase or sale of real property, which must also be approved by the Presbytery.
- **What is the difference between a "committee" and "commission"?** A committee makes recommendations that must be approved by the Session. A commission acts with the authority of the Session.
- **What is the rule of thumb about the division of labor between the congregation, pastor, and Session?**
 - Congregation: right to elect officers and buy/sell/encumber real property
 - Pastors: right to moderate meetings, what to preach, what to pray, what music to choose
 - Session: right to direct everything else, (though functional delegation of many responsibilities is the norm in churches. It is important that Session and staff are clear what has and has not been delegated.)
- **Who authorizes communion to be served and a baptism to be celebrated?** The Session.
- **What is the division of labor between pastor and Session in planning worship?** The pastor is responsible for choosing Scripture texts, prayers, preaching and music. The Session is responsible for date, time and place of worship as well as the order of worship and any liturgical furnishings (e.g. banners, etc.).

FACILITATOR'S NOTE – Depending on the amount of time allotted for this portion of the training, leaders may wish to play the discussion game described below. However, if time is insufficient to allow for a thorough discussion, it is recommended that Sessions take one section from above at a series of meetings to discuss as part of ongoing Session training.

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue

Have each elder write down their responses according to the rubric below. Elders may be invited to respond to the entire section of Session Responsibilities or to one section.

- **Something Old** – what is one thing you already knew and appreciate about Presbyterian polity?
- **Something New** – what is one thing that is new information for you?
- **Something Borrowed** – what is something that you struggle to make your own; you're not sure about?
- **Something Blue** – what is something you don't like?

Have elders share their responses according to the following rhythm:

- **Think** – read the above sections of polity and write their responses using the Something... questions.
- **Pair** – spend five minutes sharing responses one-to-one.
- **Share** – have the elders share one of their answers with the entire group.

Listed on the following pages are the sections of the Book of Order that are specifically written to describe the responsibilities of Sessions. While other parts of the Book of Order may from time to time be helpful and

apply to the Session's work at the given moment, the following sections (G-2.01 - G-2.04, G-3.0201 – G-2.0204, and W-2.03) most fully describe the Session's responsibilities are presented here *in toto*.

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

G-2.0101 Christ's Ministry

The Church's ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God's new creation. Christ's ministry is the foundation and standard for all ministry, the pattern

of the one who came "not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called to ordered ministries, to fulfill particular functions. Members and those in ordered ministries serve together under the mandate of Christ.

G-2.0102 Ordered Ministries

The Church's ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are deacons and presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders). Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. The existence of these ordered ministries in no way diminishes the

importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church. The government of this church is representative, and the right of God's people to elect presbyters and deacons is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any ordered ministry in a congregation or council of the church except by election of that body. Ordination to the ministry of deacon, ruling

elder, or minister of the Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elder) is unique to that order of ministry.

G-2.0103 Call to Ordered Ministry

The call to ordered ministry in the Church is the act of the triune God. This call is evidenced by the movement of the Holy Spirit in the individual conscience, the approval of a community of God's people, and the concurring judgment of a council of the Church.

G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications

- a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the

G-2.0105 Freedom of Conscience

It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve it in ordered ministries shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in this Constitution. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained. It is to be recognized, however, that in entering the ordered

approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church.

- b. Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek, or serve in, ordered ministry. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the council in which he or she is a member.

G-2.02 DEACONS: THE MINISTRY OF COMPASSION AND SERVICE

G-2.0201 Deacon Defined

The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in

distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.

G-2.0202 Under Authority of the Session

Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. In either case, their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session. Deacons may also be given special assignments

in the congregation, such as caring for members in need, handling educational tasks, cultivating liberality in giving, collecting and disbursing monies to specific persons or causes, or overseeing the buildings and property of the

congregation. Deacons shall assume other duties as may be delegated to them by the session, including assisting with the Lord's Supper. (W-3.0414). A congregation by a majority vote may choose not to utilize the ordered

ministry of deacons. If the congregation has neither a board of deacons nor individually commissioned deacons, the function of this ordered ministry shall be the responsibility of the ruling elders and the session.

G-2.03 RULING ELDERS: THE MINISTRY OF DISCERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE

G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and

nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with ministers of the Word and Sacrament, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as ministers of the Word and Sacrament, and they are eligible for any office.

G-2.04 GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS

G-2.0401 Election of Ruling Elders and Deacons

Ruling elders and deacons are men and women elected by the congregation from among its members. The nomination and election of ruling elders and deacons shall express the rich diversity of the congregation's membership and shall guarantee participation and inclusiveness (F-1.0403). Ruling elders and deacons shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership. Congregations may provide by their own rule for a congregational nominating committee,

provided that the committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session. The pastor shall serve ex officio and without vote. When elections are held, full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nomination from the floor of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation. A majority of all the active members present and voting shall be required to elect.

G-2.0402 Preparation for Ministry as a Ruling Elder or Deacon

When persons have been elected to the ordered ministry of ruling elder or deacon, the session shall provide a period of study and preparation, after which the session shall examine them as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; and the

duties of the ministry. The session shall also confer with them as to their willingness to undertake the ministry appropriate to the order. If the examination is approved, the session shall appoint a day for the service of ordination and installation.

G-2.0403 Service of Ordination and Installation

The service of ordination and installation shall focus upon Christ and the joy and responsibility of serving him through the mission and ministry of the church and shall include a sermon appropriate to the occasion. The moderator of session or person authorized

to preside shall state briefly the nature of the ministry of ruling elder and deacon. The act of ordination and installation takes place in the context of worship. The order for that service of worship in the Directory for Worship (W-4.04) shall be followed.

G-2.0404 Terms of Service

Ruling elders and deacons shall be elected to serve terms of no more than three years on the session or board of deacons and may be eligible for reelection according to congregational rule. However, no ruling elder or deacon shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years, and a ruling elder or deacon who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year. Election shall be to classes as nearly equal in number as possible, with the term of only one class ending each year. The presbytery

G-2.0405 Dissolution of Relationship

A ruling elder or deacon may resign from the session or board of deacons, with the session's consent. On ceasing to be an active member of a congregation, a ruling elder or deacon ceases to be a member of its session or board. When a ruling elder or deacon, because

G-2.0406 Release from Ministry as a Ruling Elder or Deacon

If a ruling elder or deacon who is in good standing, against whom no inquiry has been initiated, and against whom no charges have been filed, shall make application to the session to be released from the exercise of the ordered ministry, the session of the congregation in which he or she holds membership, upon granting the release, shall delete that person's name from the appropriate register of ruling elders or deacons of the congregation. No judgment of failure on the part of the ruling elder or deacon is implied in this action. Release

G-2.0407 Renunciation of Jurisdiction

When a ruling elder or deacon submits to the clerk of session a written statement renouncing the jurisdiction of this church, the renunciation shall be effective upon receipt. When a ruling elder or deacon persists in work disapproved by the session, the session shall consult with him or her and shall give notice of its disapproval. If, after having been provided opportunity for consultation and upon written notice of its disapproval, the ruling elder or deacon persists in the work, the session may then conclude that the ruling elder

THE SESSION G-3.0201

The session is the council for the congregation. It shall be composed of those persons elected by the congregation to active service as ruling elders, together with all installed pastors and associate pastors. All members of the session are entitled to vote. The pastor shall be the moderator of the session, and the session shall not meet without the pastor or designated

may, upon written request and by majority vote, grant a congregation a waiver of this limitation on terms. Once ordained and while they are active members of any congregation of this denomination, ruling elders or deacons not in active service on a session or board of deacons continue to bear the responsibilities of the ministry to which they have been ordained, except as provided in G-2.0406, G-2.0407, or in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

of change of residence or disability, is unable for a period of one year to perform the duties of the ministry to which he or she was installed, the active relationship shall be dissolved by the session unless there is good reason not to do so, which shall be recorded.

from the exercise of the ministry of ruling elder or deacon requires a discontinuation of all functions of that ministry. The status of one so released shall be the same as any church member. Should a person released under this section later desire to be restored to that ordered ministry, that person shall make application to the session that granted the release, and upon approval of the session, that person shall be restored to the exercise of the ministry from which he or she was released without re-ordination.

or deacon has renounced the jurisdiction of this church. Renunciation of jurisdiction shall remove the ruling elder or deacon from membership and ordered ministry and shall terminate the exercise of the ministry. The renunciation shall be reported by the clerk of session at the next meeting of the session, which shall record the renunciation, delete the name of the ruling elder or deacon from the appropriate register, and take such other administrative actions as may be required by this Constitution.

moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provisions for a moderator. Presbyteries shall provide by rule for moderators when the session is without a moderator for reasons of vacancy or inconvenience.

The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the congregation, the session shall keep before it the marks of the Church, the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed congregations have identified themselves throughout history and the six Great Ends of the Church. In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:

- a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. This responsibility shall include providing a place where the congregation may regularly gather for worship, education, and spiritual nurture; providing for regular preaching of the Word by a minister of the Word and Sacrament or other person prepared and approved for the work; planning and leading regular efforts to reach into the community and the world with the message of salvation and the invitation to enter into committed discipleship; planning and leading ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community in accordance with the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ; and initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts that bear witness to the love and grace of God.
- b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received. This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the

Lord's Supper at least quarterly and the administration of Baptism as appropriate, in accordance with the principles of the Directory for Worship; and exercising pastoral care among the congregation in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the congregation may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.

- c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ. This responsibility shall include receiving and dismissing members; reviewing the roll of active members at least annually and counseling with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership; providing programs of nurture, education, and fellowship; training, examining, ordaining, and installing those elected by the congregation as ruling elders and deacons; encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources; managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission; directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation; employing the administrative staff of the congregation; leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

G-3.0202 Relations with Other Councils

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions:

- a. elect, as commissioners to presbytery, ruling elders from the congregation, preferably for at least a year, and receive their reports;
- b. nominate to presbytery ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered for election as commissioners to synod and General Assembly, and to serve on committees or commissions of the same, bearing in mind

principles of inclusiveness and fair representation in the decision making of the church (F-1.0403);

- c. see that the guidance and communication of presbytery, synod, and General Assembly are considered, and that any binding actions are observed and carried out;
- d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;
- e. propose to the presbytery, or through it to the synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church; and

f. send to presbytery and General Assembly requested statistics and other information

according to the requirements of those bodies, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

G-3.0203 Meetings

The session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. The moderator shall call a special meeting when he or she deems necessary or when requested in writing by any two members of the session. The business to be transacted at special meetings shall be limited to items specifically listed in the call for the meeting. There

shall be reasonable notice given of all special meetings. The session shall also meet when directed by presbytery. Sessions shall provide by rule for a quorum for meetings; such quorum shall include the moderator and either a specific number of ruling elders or a specific percentage of those ruling elders in current service on the session.

G-3.0204 Minutes and Records

Minutes of the session shall be subject to the provisions of G-3.0107. They shall contain the minutes of all meetings of the congregation and all joint meetings with deacons and trustees. Each session shall maintain the following roll and registers:

a. Membership Roll

There shall be rolls of baptized, active, and affiliate members in accordance with G1.0401, G-1.0402 and G-1.0403. The session shall delete names from the roll of the congregation upon the member's death, admission to membership in another congregation or presbytery, or renunciation of jurisdiction. The session may

delete names from the roll of the congregation when a member so requests or has moved or otherwise ceased to participate actively in the work and worship of the congregation for a period of two years. The session shall seek to restore members to active participation and shall provide written notice before deleting names due to member inactivity.

b. Registers

There shall be registers of baptisms authorized by the session, of ruling elders and deacons, of installed pastors with dates of service, and such other registers as the session may deem necessary.

G-3.0205 Finances

In addition to those responsibilities described in G-3.0113, the session shall prepare and adopt a budget and determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences. It shall authorize offerings for Christian purposes and shall account for the proceeds of such offerings and their disbursement. It shall provide full information to the congregation concerning its decisions in such matters. The session shall elect a treasurer for such term as the session shall decide and shall supervise his or her work or delegate that supervision to a board of deacons or trustees. Those in charge of various congregational funds shall report at least annually to the session and more often as requested. Sessions may

provide by rule for standard financial practices of the congregation, but shall in no case fail to observe the following procedures:

- a. All offerings shall be counted and recorded by at least two duly appointed persons, or by one fidelity bonded person;
- b. Financial books and records adequate to reflect all financial transactions shall be kept and shall be open to inspection by authorized church officers at reasonable times;
- c. Periodic, and in no case less than annual, reports of all financial activities shall be made to the session or entity vested with financial oversight.

W-2.03: Leadership in Worship and Ordered Ministries

W-2.0301: Gifts for Service

God pours out the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon each Christian in Baptism, and all are called to use these gifts for the glory of God. Therefore, it is appropriate for any member of the church to pray, read Scripture, or assist in worship in other ways according to his or her gifts.

W-2.0302: Deacons

Deacons are called to lead the congregation in compassion, witness, and service, representing the ministry of the church in the world and the presence of the world in the church. While deacons have no particular responsibilities for the ordering of worship, the session

W-2.0303: Ruling Elders

Ruling elders are called to nurture the common life of the people of God through their gifts of discernment and governance. They should also cultivate an ability to teach the Word when called upon to do so. When appropriately prepared and commissioned by the presbytery, ruling elders may proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments in a particular congregation (G-2.1001).

In a particular congregation, ruling elders shall provide for the church's worship and encourage the people's participation. Specifically, when serving together

W-2.0304: Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elders) are called to proclaim the Word, preside at the Sacraments, and equip the people for ministry in Jesus' name. Specifically, ministers of the Word and Sacrament† are responsible for: the selection of

W-2.0305: Shared Responsibility and Accountability

In a particular congregation, the order of worship is the responsibility of the minister of the Word and Sacrament† with the concurrence of the session. The selection of hymnals, service books, Bibles, and other more permanent worship resources is the responsibility of the session with the concurrence of the minister of the Word and Sacrament, and in consultation with church musicians and educators.

Where there is a music leader or choir director, the minister of the Word and Sacrament will confer with that person on anthems and other musical offerings; the session will see that these conferences take place

By their gifts and training, some are called to particular acts of leadership in worship and have particular responsibilities for ordering the service. These specific roles and responsibilities are undertaken in service to God and to the congregation and should in no way diminish the leadership of other members or overshadow the primary participation of the worshiping assembly.

should ensure that deacons (where present) have regular opportunities to lead in worship, and that their ministries of compassion, witness, and service are reflected in the public services of the church.

on the session, ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament†: make provision for the regular preaching of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments, corporate prayer, and the offering of praise to God in song; oversee and approve all public worship in the congregation, with the exception of responsibilities reserved for the minister of the Word and Sacrament†; determine occasions, days, times, and places for worship; and have responsibility for the arrangement of worship space, the use of special appointments (flowers, candles, banners, paraments, and other objects), and the ministries of music, drama, dance, and visual arts.

Scriptures to be read, the preparation of the sermon, the prayers to be offered, the selection of music to be sung, printed worship aids or media presentations for a given service, and the use of drama, dance, and other art forms in a particular service of worship.

appropriately and on a regular basis. The minister of the Word and Sacrament† may confer with a committee in planning particular services of worship. The session is responsible for educating the congregation about the church's worship, in order to facilitate their full and active participation. It is appropriate that the session provide for the regular study of this Directory for Worship, particularly in the training of ruling elders and deacons.

In fulfilling their responsibilities for worship, sessions are accountable to presbytery. It is appropriate that the presbyteries discuss with sessions the character of their congregation's worship, the standards governing

it, and the fruit that it bears in the mission and ministry of the church. It is appropriate that the presbyteries provide instruction in worship, making use of this Directory for Worship in the preparation of candidates

for ordination, and in the ongoing nurture of ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

Session Six: Deacon Duties



FAQs Game

Divide the group into two teams. Have everyone covenant not to peek at the answers on the next page. Take turns allowing each team the opportunity to answer one of the FAQs listed below. If a team answers incorrectly, the other team is allowed to answer. One point is awarded for each correct answer. The team with the youngest member goes first.

What Would JC (John Calvin) do?

Sally is asked by the Nominating Committee if she would be willing to serve as a deacon for First Church if elected by the congregation. She says she will consider doing so. She served as a deacon ten years ago at a church in another city and asks if she will need to be ordained again to serve at First Church. How do you respond to Sally?

Joe has demonstrated gifts to serve as a deacon, but he is disabled, confined to his home, and could not attend deacons' meetings. Can he serve as a deacon?

Faith Church is a very small congregation and does not have a board of deacons. Who is responsible for carrying out the diaconal ministry of Faith Church?

The Nominating Committee has asked Bart to serve on the deacons, which at Grace Church functions like a Building and Grounds Committee. Bart feels his gifts are more aligned with the Session's Pastoral Care Committee and asked to be nominated for Session instead of Deacons. What are the Nominating Committee's responsibilities as they respond to Bart's request?

Jim has been asked to serve as a deacon and would love to do so. However, he takes Scripture very seriously and wonders about I Timothy 3:12 (a deacon must be married only once). He remarried after his first wife died and wonders, "Does this verse apply to him?"

The Nominating Committee has approached Sarah about serving as a deacon for Hope Church. She has previously been ordained as an elder. Does she have to give up her ordination as an elder in order to serve as a deacon?

Nancy has served on the Board of Deacons at Christ Church for two consecutive three-year terms. The Nominating Committee is having trouble finding people willing to serve for the coming year and wonders, "Is Nancy allowed to serve on the board for another three-year term?"

Tom is a deacon at Southside Church and has become interested in the plight of local farm workers—including dangerous working conditions and poor pay. He wonders if this is something the Board of Deacons might consider addressing—or should his concern be directed to the Missions Committee?

The Southside Church board of deacons is composed of six members, five of whom are currently women. Someone on the Nominating Committee says she thought the Book of Order stipulated there should be equal numbers of men and women on the board. What should the Nominating Committee do next?

What Would JC (John Calvin) do?

Sally is asked by the Nominating Committee if she would be willing to serve as a deacon for First Church if elected by the congregation. She says she will consider doing so. She served as a deacon ten years ago at a church in another city and asks if she will need to be ordained again to serve at First Church. How do you respond to Sally? **Sally does not need to be ordained again. Ordination in one congregation is considered ordination for the whole church and transfers accordingly.**

Joe has demonstrated gifts to serve as a deacon, but he is disabled, confined to his home, and could not attend deacons' meetings. Can he serve as a deacon? **Joe is allowed to serve. The key phrase is *has demonstrated gifts to serve*. The need is for the church to find/facilitate ways that Joe's gifts can be used in service, perhaps in creative ways.**

Faith Church is a very small congregation and does not have a board of deacons. Who is responsible for carrying out the diaconal ministry of Faith Church? **In the absence of a diaconate, the Session is responsible for seeing that diaconal ministries of care are carried out.**

The Nominating Committee has asked Bart to serve on the deacons, which at Grace Church functions like a Building and Grounds Committee. Bart feels his gifts are more aligned with the Session's Pastoral Care Committee and asked to be nominated for Session instead of Deacons. What are the Nominating Committee's responsibilities as they respond to Bart's request? **Although it is highly unusual for deacons to function like a Building and Grounds Committee, it is within their scope of duties as outlined in G-2.0202. The Nominating Committee must decide if they want to nominate Bart to serve as a deacon, for which, at this church, he does not have "demonstrated gifts," or ask him to serve on Session where his gifts and the call to serve are congruent.**

Jim has been asked to serve as a deacon and would love to do so. However, he takes Scripture very seriously and wonders about I Timothy 3:12 (a deacon must be married only once). He remarried after his first wife died and wonders, "Does this verse apply to him?" **The Apostle Paul's concern was the licentious culture in Ephesus and the need for Christians to live in ways that express the sanctity of the marital bond. This verse does not apply to Jim.**

The Nominating Committee has approached Sarah about serving as a deacon for Hope Church. She has previously been ordained as an elder. Does she have to give up her ordination as an elder in order to serve as a deacon? **Each ordered ministry is unique to that order. Sarah needs to be ordained as a deacon even though she was previously ordained as an elder.**

Nancy has served on the Board of Deacons at Christ Church for two consecutive three-year terms. The Nominating Committee is having trouble finding people willing to serve for the coming year and wonders, "Is Nancy allowed to serve on the board for just one more year until we can find her replacement?" **No. Nice try...thanks for asking. But no.**

Tom is a deacon at Southside Church and has become interested in the plight of local farm workers—including dangerous working conditions and poor pay. He wonders if this is something the Board of Deacons might consider addressing—or should his concern be directed to the Missions Committee? **Ministry that responds to the plight of local farm workers is certainly within the scope of duties as outlined in G-2.0201, and is also appropriate for a congregation's Missions Committee. Where Tom's concern should be directed is a matter best discussed between Session and Deacons but ultimately is authorized by Session.**

The Southside Church board of deacons is composed of six members, five of whom are currently women. Someone on the Nominating Committee says she thought the Book of Order stipulated there should be equal numbers of men and

women on the board. What should the Nominating Committee do next? **Ordinarily, the Nominating Committee will seek to balance the Diaconate by nominating at least some men. However, care must be taken to ensure that all those nominated have demonstrated gifts for the service of deacon.**

FACILITATOR'S NOTE – Depending on the amount of time allotted for this portion of the training, leaders may wish to play the discussion game described below. However, if time is insufficient to allow for a thorough discussion, it is recommended that deacons take one section from above at a series of meetings to discuss as part of ongoing training.



Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue

Have each deacon write down their responses according to the rubric below. Deacons may be invited to respond to the entire section of Deacon Responsibilities or to one section.

- **Something Old** – what is one thing you already knew and appreciate about Presbyterian polity?
- **Something New** – what is one thing that is new information for you?
- **Something Borrowed** – what is something that you struggle to make your own; you're not sure about?
- **Something Blue** – what is something you don't like?

Have deacons share their responses according to the following rhythm:

- **Think** – read the above sections of polity and write their responses using the Something... questions.
- **Pair** – spend five minutes sharing responses one-to-one.
- **Share** – have the deacons share one of their answers with the entire group.

DEACONS IN THE BOOK OF ORDER

Listed on the following pages are the sections of the Book of Order that are specifically written to describe the responsibilities of Deacons. While other parts of the Book of Order may from time to time be helpful and

apply to the Deacon's work at the given moment, the following sections (G-2.01—05, G-2.0201—04, G-2.0401—07, W-2.0301—02) most fully describe the Deacon's duties are presented here *in toto*.

G-2.01 ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

G-2.0101 Christ's Ministry

The Church's ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God's new creation. Christ's ministry is the foundation and standard for all ministry, the pattern of

the one who came "not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called to ordered ministries, to fulfill particular functions. Members and those in ordered ministries serve together under the mandate of Christ.

G-2.0102 Ordered Ministries

The Church's ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are deacons and presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders). Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. The existence of these ordered ministries in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the

church. The government of this church is representative, and the right of God's people to elect presbyters and deacons is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any ordered ministry in a congregation or council of the church except by election of that body. Ordination to the ministry of deacon, ruling elder, or minister of the Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elder) is unique to that order of ministry.

G-2.0103 Call to Ordered Ministry

The call to ordered ministry in the Church is the act of the triune God. This call is evidenced by the movement

of the Holy Spirit in the individual conscience, the approval of a community of God's people, and the concurring judgment of a council of the Church.

G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications

To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church. Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire

to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

G-2.0105 Freedom of Conscience

It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve it in ordered ministries shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in this Constitution. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained. It is to be recognized, however, that in entering the ordered

ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek, or serve in, ordered ministry. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the council in which he or she is a member.

G-2.02 DEACONS: THE MINISTRY OF COMPASSION AND SERVICE

G-2.0201 Deacon Defined

The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those

burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.

G-2.0202 Under Authority of the Session

Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. In either case, their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session. Deacons may also be given special assignments in the congregation, such as caring for members in need, handling educational tasks, cultivating liberality in giving, collecting and disbursing monies to specific persons or causes, or overseeing the buildings and property of the

congregation. Deacons shall assume other duties as may be delegated to them by the session, including assisting with the Lord's Supper. (W-3.0414). A congregation by a majority vote may choose not to utilize the ordered ministry of deacons. If the congregation has neither a board of deacons nor individually commissioned deacons, the function of this ordered ministry shall be the responsibility of the ruling elders and the session.

G-2.04 GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS

G-2.0401 Election of Ruling Elders and Deacons

Ruling elders and deacons are men and women elected by the congregation from among its members. The nomination and election of ruling elders and deacons shall express the rich diversity of the congregation's membership and shall guarantee participation and inclusiveness (F-1.0403). Ruling elders and deacons shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership. Congregations may provide by their own

rule for a congregational nominating committee, provided that the committee shall consist of at least three active members of the congregation and shall include at least one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session. The pastor shall serve *ex officio* and without vote. When elections are held, full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nomination from the floor of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation. A majority of all the active members present and voting shall be required to elect.

G-2.0402 Preparation for Ministry as a Ruling Elder or Deacon

When persons have been elected to the ordered ministry of ruling elder or deacon, the session shall provide a period of study and preparation, after which the session shall examine them as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in

the Constitution of the church; and the duties of the ministry. The session shall also confer with them as to their willingness to undertake the ministry appropriate to the order. If the examination is approved, the session shall appoint a day for the service of ordination and installation.

G-2.0403 Service of Ordination and Installation

The service of ordination and installation shall focus upon Christ and the joy and responsibility of serving him through the mission and ministry of the church and shall include a sermon appropriate to the occasion. The moderator of session or person authorized to preside

shall state briefly the nature of the ministry of ruling elder and deacon. The act of ordination and installation takes place in the context of worship. The order for that service of worship in the Directory for Worship (W-4.04) shall be followed.

G-2.0404 Terms of Service

Ruling elders and deacons shall be elected to serve terms of no more than three years on the session or board of deacons and may be eligible for reelection according to congregational rule. However, no ruling elder or deacon shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years, and a ruling elder or deacon who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year. Election shall be to classes as nearly equal in number as possible, with the

term of only one class ending each year. The presbytery may, upon written request and by majority vote, grant a congregation a waiver of this limitation on terms. Once ordained and while they are active members of any congregation of this denomination, ruling elders or deacons not in active service on a session or board of deacons continue to bear the responsibilities of the ministry to which they have been ordained, except as provided in G-2.0406, G-2.0407, or in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

G-2.0405 Dissolution of Relationship

A ruling elder or deacon may resign from the session or board of deacons, with the session's consent. On ceasing to be an active member of a congregation, a ruling elder or deacon ceases to be a member of its session or board. When a ruling elder or deacon, because of change of

residence or disability, is unable for a period of one year to perform the duties of the ministry to which he or she was installed, the active relationship shall be dissolved by the session unless there is good reason not to do so, which shall be recorded.

G-2.0406 Release from Ministry as a Ruling Elder or Deacon

If a ruling elder or deacon who is in good standing, against whom no inquiry has been initiated, and against whom no charges have been filed, shall make application to the session to be released from the exercise of the ordered ministry, the session of the congregation in which he or she holds membership, upon granting the release, shall delete that person's name from the appropriate register of ruling elders or deacons of the congregation. No judgment of failure on the part of the ruling elder or deacon is implied in this action. Release

from the exercise of the ministry of ruling elder or deacon requires a discontinuation of all functions of that ministry. The status of one so released shall be the same as any church member. Should a person released under this section later desire to be restored to that ordered ministry, that person shall make application to the session that granted the release, and upon approval of the session, that person shall be restored to the exercise of the ministry from which he or she was released without re-ordination.

G-2.0407 Renunciation of Jurisdiction

When a ruling elder or deacon submits to the clerk of session a written statement renouncing the jurisdiction of this church, the renunciation shall be effective upon receipt. When a ruling elder or deacon persists in work disapproved by the session, the session shall consult with him or her and shall give notice of its disapproval. If, after having been provided opportunity for consultation and upon written notice of its disapproval, the ruling elder or deacon persists in the work, the session may then

conclude that the ruling elder or deacon has renounced the jurisdiction of this church. Renunciation of jurisdiction shall remove the ruling elder or deacon from membership and ordered ministry and shall terminate the exercise of the ministry. The renunciation shall be reported by the clerk of session at the next meeting of the session, which shall record the renunciation, delete the name of the ruling elder or deacon from the appropriate register, and take such other administrative actions as may be required by this Constitution.

W-2.03 LEADERSHIP IN WORSHIP AND ORDERED MINISTRIES

W-2.0301: Gifts for Service

God pours out the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon each Christian in Baptism, and all are called to use these gifts for the glory of God. Therefore, it is appropriate for any member of the church to pray, read Scripture, or assist in worship in other ways according to his or her gifts.

By their gifts and training, some are called to particular acts of leadership in worship and have particular responsibilities for ordering the service. These specific roles and responsibilities are undertaken in service to God and to the congregation and should in no way diminish the leadership of other members or overshadow the primary participation of the worshiping assembly.

W-2.0302: Deacons

Deacons are called to lead the congregation in compassion, witness, and service, representing the ministry of the church in the world and the presence of the world in the church. While deacons have no particular

responsibilities for the ordering of worship, the session should ensure that deacons (where present) have regular opportunities to lead in worship, and that their ministries of compassion, witness, and service are reflected in the public services of the church.

DEACONS IN OTHER TRADITIONS

UCC and Baptist—charged with spiritual leadership of the church and includes diaconal responsibilities.

Roman Catholics recognize two types of deacons: *Permanent deacons* are men ordained to an office in the Catholic Church who normally have no intention or desire of becoming priests. He can be single or married. If the latter, he must be married *before* being ordained a deacon. If his wife dies before him, he may be ordained a priest if the bishop permits and approves. Permanent deacons, especially those who are married, have secular jobs so support their families and also help the local pastor by visiting the sick, teaching the faith, counseling couples and individuals, working on parish committees and councils, and giving advice to the pastor. *Transitional*

deacons are *seminarians*, students in the last phase of training for the Catholic priesthood. After being a deacon for a year, they're ordained a priest by the bishop. Deacons can baptize, witness marriages, perform funeral and burial services outside of Mass, distribute Holy Communion, and preach the *homily* (which is the sermon given after the Gospel at Mass. Deacons, priests, and bishops are considered *clerics*.

Mormon Church—Deacons are officers of the Aaronic priesthood. A boy is normally ordained a deacon when he is 12 years of age or older. Some of a deacon's responsibilities are to pass the sacrament and collect fast offerings from the members.

Session Seven: Robert's Rules of Order⁵

Presbyterian councils use Robert's Rules of Order (RRO) for meetings. RRO allows a council to do things "decently and in order" as well as move the business of a meeting along with "all due Presbyterian haste." More significantly, RRO protects the voice and will of *both* the minority and majority opinion of elders. Listed below are some common rules of thumb for RRO.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE – For each rule of thumb, ask elders to consider how the rule protects due process in a discussion. After everyone has had a chance to write their own notes, discuss their perspectives. Have elders fold the paper to cover the responses offered below.

- Everyone gets a chance to speak once before someone speaks a second time. *How it helps:* _____.
- Someone is allowed to speak to a motion only twice. *How it helps:* _____.
- Only new information or perspective is necessary to be shared. *How it helps:* _____.
- Each elder has the right to call the question. *How it helps:* _____.
- Direct your speech to the moderator rather than other elders. *How it helps:* _____.
- There is no discussion until a motion is on the table. *How it helps:* _____.

Comic Relief!

Before looking at the answers, watch this YouTube video on "The Session Ref," compliments of the Presbytery of San Fernando: <http://www.sfpresby.org/new-video-the-session-ref/>.



DISCUSSION

- Which of these habits are the easiest and which the most difficult for you as an individual to follow?
- Which of these habits are the easiest and which the most difficult for all y'all as a group to follow?
- For each of your answers above, ponder why that might be...hmmm?

⁵ See Appendix B for an overview of "Motion Basics" for RRO.

- **Everyone gets a chance to speak once before someone speaks a second time** – This protects those who take longer to process the discussion (e.g. introverts or those less familiar with a topic) and prevents one, dominant voice from railroading a discussion.
- **Someone is allowed to speak to a motion only twice** – See above, re: railroading.
- **Only new information or perspective is necessary to be shared** – This prevents redundancy and keeps meetings from going on and on and...well, you get it.
- **Each elder has the right to call the question** – See above, re: on and on....
- **Direct your speech to the moderator rather than other elders** – This practice is especially useful if the issue being discussed is controversial or divisive. The tendency in groups is for a speaker to “court the room” by directing her or his words to the entire group. When a speaker addresses a single person, as if in a private conversation, the tendency is for the speaker to use more emotionally neutral words and tone and to focus on the content of one’s opinion, perspective, and solution to the presenting problem. Directing one’s speech to the moderator does not always have this effect, but the habit remains a good one for Sessions to cultivate.
- **There is no discussion until a motion is on the table** – This helps focus meetings toward being more efficient. It also forces one elder to be specific about a choice and forces the body to take a stand for or against a proposed action. Brene Brown says that “clear is kind.” A specific motion moves the body toward clarity.

Session Eight: Ordination Vows

Every officer in the Presbyterian Church is ordained. In Reformed faith, to be ordained is to be set apart for a particular function for a particular faith community. One is never ordained in general or in theory, and ordination does not change the person's intellect, character, training, or spiritual wholeness. Rather in ordination a person is making covenant with a community to do a specific work, and a community is making covenant with a person to follow where "they rightly lead according to the Way of Jesus Christ."

There are nine ordination vows officers are asked to affirm. They are,

1. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
2. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as God's Word to you?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our Church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
4. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
5. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
6. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
7. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?
8. Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
9. Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

Think, Pair, Share

- Do you understand what each vow means? If not, please voice your curiosity now.
- Which of the ordination vows will be easiest for you to live into with faithful obedience?
- Which of the ordination vows will be most difficult for you to live into with faithful obedience?

Appendix A: The Book of Confessions⁶

The first two documents come from the earliest centuries of the church history and are held in common by many churches world-wide.

The Nicene Creed

In the first three centuries, the church found itself in a hostile environment. On the one hand, it grappled with the challenge of relating the language of the gospel, developed in a Hebraic and Jewish-Christian context, to a Graeco-Roman world. On the other hand, it was threatened not only by persecution, but also by ideas that were in conflict with the biblical witness.

In A.D. 312, Constantine won control of the Roman Empire in the battle of Milvian Bridge. Attributing his victory to the intervention of Jesus Christ, he elevated Christianity to favored status in the empire. “One God, one Lord, one faith, one church, one empire, one emperor” became his motto.

The new emperor soon discovered that “one faith and one church” were fractured by theological disputes, especially conflicting understandings of the nature of Christ. Arius, a priest of the church in Alexandria, asserted that the divine Christ, the Word through whom all things have their existence, was created by God before the beginning of time. Therefore, the

divinity of Christ was similar to the divinity of God, but not of the same essence.

Arius was opposed by a bishop called Alexander, together with his associate and successor, Athanasius. They affirmed that the divinity of Christ, the Son, is of the same substance as the divinity of God, the Father. To hold otherwise, they said, was to open the possibility of polytheism, and to imply that knowledge of God in Christ was not final knowledge of God.

Constantine convened a council in Nicaea in A.D. 325. A creed reflecting the position of Alexander and Athanasius was written and signed by a majority of the bishops. The two parties continued to battle each other. In 381, a second council met in Constantinople. It adopted a revised and expanded form of the first creed, known as the Nicene Creed.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joins with Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and most Protestant churches in its affirmation (though the Orthodox have a slightly different understanding of the role of the Spirit)

The Apostles’ Creed

The Apostles’ Creed reflects the theology of the first century church. It is based on Jesus’ command to ‘make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit’. In the pre-literary age of the earliest church repetition of statements such as the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments, helped transmit the faith.

Sometime before 180 AD there arose a teacher in Rome called Marcion. Marcion wanted to make a distinction between the God of the Old Testament, whom he saw as cruel and unfair, and the God revealed in Christ who was loving and merciful. He proposed jettisoning the Old Testament and only keeping certain books we have in our New Testament. The Apostles Creed was formulated partly as an answer to his claims.

It affirms that the God of Creation is the Father of Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was

crucified under Pontius Pilate, was buried and raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven, where he rules with the Father. It also affirms belief in the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the resurrection of the body.

Candidates for membership in the church, having undergone a lengthy period of moral and doctrinal instruction, were asked at baptism to state what they believed. They responded in the words of this creed. A debate later arose regarding those who under persecution renounced their faith. Should they be readmitted to the church? The phrase was added, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.”

In the fourth and fifth centuries, North African Christians debated the question of whether the church was an exclusive sect composed of a heroic few or included all who confessed Jesus Christ. This led to the phrases “holy” (belonging to God) and “catholic”

⁶This section adapted from Eneyas Freitas, *ibid.* Used with permission.

(universal) being added. Finally, in the fifth century, In Gaul, the phrase “he descended into hell” attempted to

settle questions that were being asked about those who were born before Christ had come into the world.

Three documents from the period of the Reformation are included in the Book of Confessions, each originating in a different country: Scotland, Germany, and Switzerland.

Scots Confession

The Scots Confession was written at a turning point in the history of Scotland. In 16th century England, the first great Protestant Queen Elizabeth was on the throne. Scotland, under the rule of Queen Regent Mary of Guise, was under Catholic control and had strong alliances with France, not least because in August 1548, when she was six years 10 old, the rightful heir to the Scottish throne Mary Stuart (Elizabeth’s 1st cousin) had been sent to France both for protection and to strengthen the alliance between the two Catholic nations.

John Knox was born around 1514 in Haddington, on the East coast of Scotland. He studied theology and became a Catholic priest before coming under the influence of Reformation preachers and converting to the Protestant faith, taking the position of chaplain to a group of renegade priests.

The French invaded and John Knox was taken into slavery in the French fleet. The English government intervened, and he was released and became a preacher on the Scottish border. Arousing hostility by his opposition to Catholicism, he had to flee to Geneva, where he was befriended by, and studied under John Calvin.

Returning to England he was such a threat to the regent Queen Mary of Guise that she ordered him tried for heresy and burnt an effigy of him in Edinburgh as a warning of what would become of those who embraced Protestant ways. Revolution was in the air. In 1560 Mary

of Guise died and Scotland’s links with France... and Catholicism... were severed.

The Scottish Parliament declared Scotland a Protestant nation and asked the clergy to frame a confession of faith. Six ministers, including John Knox, completed their work in four days. In 1560, the document was ratified by Parliament as “doctrine grounded upon the infallible Word of God.” It remained the Creed of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland until 1647 when the Westminster Confession was adopted.

The first eleven chapters of the Scots Confession tell of God’s providential acts in biblical history. The Kirk (Scottish word for church) of the present and future is continuous with the Kirk of God’s people going back to Adam. The Scots Confession sees the Scriptures as a sacred history in which the present-day church, through the Holy Spirit, participates until the end of time. God’s providential deliverance is a continuing, not merely a past, reality.

The Scots Confession is best known for setting forth the three marks of a true and faithful church:

- “The true preaching of the Word of God,”
- “The right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus,”
- “Ecclesiastical discipline...whereby vice is repressed, and virtue nourished.”

The Heidelberg Catechism

On Reformation Sunday we sometimes describe how the Protestant Reformation began the day Martin Luther of Germany posted his ninety-five theses on the Wittenberg Cathedral door. The truth is that the Reformation was not a singular movement, but many streams that broke out throughout Europe. The different movements did not always agree.

Tension between Lutherans and Reformed Christians was particularly intense. Lutherans taught that Christ was bodily present in the bread and wine every time communion was celebrated. The Reformed Christians, following the teachings of Friedrich Zwingli strongly disagreed!

Things came to a head in Heidelberg were a bitter feud broke out between a High Lutheran pastor, Tilemann Hesshus and a Zwinglian pastor Wilhelm Klebitz. Hesshus was principal of the theological School. He went away for a few days and in his absence the college awarded a theological degree to Klebitz. On his return, Hesshus preached a sermon denouncing Klebitz as a ‘Zwinglian devil’ demanding that he be exiled from the church and the region! He was ignored.

The following Sunday, Klebitz was administering the sacrament at church. When he raised the cup, Hesshus ran towards him and wrenched it from his hands. An astonished congregation looked on as the two pastors grappled in the chancel! Needless to say they were both dismissed.

The Second Helvetic Confession

Whilst the Heidelberg Catechism did receive wide acceptance in the Reformed churches, it was still outside acceptance of some amongst the Lutherans. They demanded that Frederick the Elector, governor of the Palatinate, (the motivator for its production) be brought to trial for heresy. Not a theologian himself, Frederick turned to a renowned Reformed pastor of the day called Heinrich Bullinger, who offered Governor Frederick the ‘Second Helvetic Confession’ as the basis for his defense.

The confession was already composed, as Bullinger intended to attach it to his last will and testament to the Zurich church, but events in Germany brought it into the public arena. When the Imperial Diet, the ruling body of Germany, met for trial in 1566, Frederick was exonerated. Meanwhile, the churches of Switzerland adopted Bullinger’s confession as their new confession of faith. (*The word “Helvetic” is Latin for “Swiss.”*).

The Second Helvetic Confession affirms the authority of the Scriptures for the church’s government and reformation. At the same time, the confession details issues of worship, church order and conflict, ministry, the sacraments, and marriage and it served as a guidebook for worship.

Frederick the Elector was ruler of the Palatinate area of Germany where all this took place. Anxious to restore peace, he asked two young men of Heidelberg—Zacharias Ursinus, professor of theology, and Kaspar Olevianus, preacher to the city—to prepare a catechism acceptable to both Zwinglians and Lutherans. Completed in 1562, the Heidelberg Catechism, a series of questions and answers, was published in January of the following year and enabled the churches to work together.

The peaceful tone of the catechism reveals nothing of the controversy that called it forth. On the vexing communion question, the catechism denies that the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ but affirms that “*by this visible sign and pledge . . . we come to share in his true body and blood through the working of the Holy Spirit . . .*” (paragraph 4.079).

A rising influence within the reformed movement were the ‘anabaptist’ sects (The forerunners of the Baptist movements) who taught that infant baptism was not a true sacrament. Whilst the confession is generally mild in tone, some of the strongest words are against the Anabaptists!

We condemn the anabaptists, who deny that newborn infants of the faithful are to be baptized. For according to evangelical teaching, of such is the Kingdom of God, and they are in the covenant of God. Why, then, should the sign of God’s covenant not be given to them? Why should those who belong to God and are in his Church not be initiated by holy baptism? We condemn also the Anabaptists in the rest of their peculiar doctrines which they hold contrary to the Word of God. We therefore are not Anabaptists and have nothing in common with them. (5.192)

As a church we have two sacraments. The Heidelberg Confession helps clarify our position on Communion, the Second Helvetic our understanding of baptism.

The Westminster Standards

In 1643, the English House of Commons adopted an ordinance calling for the “*settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England (in a manner) most agreeable to God’s Holy Word and most apt to procure the peace of the church at home and nearer abroad.*” After the ordinance passed the House of Lords, an assembly to accomplish this work convened in Westminster Abbey.

The Parliament nominated one hundred fifty-one persons to the assembly. Thirty were members of Parliament; the others were “learned, godly, and judicious divines.” Five Scottish clergymen were in attendance and had the right of discussion but not vote. Churches in Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and the American colonies were invited to send delegates, though none came. The assembly held 1,163 sessions, finally concluding in 1649.

The Westminster Assembly conducted its work in an atmosphere of crisis. Internal conflicts were tearing apart both England and the English church. Political and religious problems were inseparable. Who should rule the church? Who should rule the state? What power should the king have? What power had Parliament, local councils, and assemblies?

- The Anglican party stood for royal rule in England with the sovereign also head of the church’s government.
- The Presbyterian party sought to vest authority in elected representatives of the 13

people, both in Parliament and in church presbyteries.

- An emerging third party, soon led by Oliver Cromwell, wanted local autonomy for churches and limited powers for both king and Parliament.

Even before the assembly met, civil war broke out. But the assembly went to work and eventually completed the “Form of Presbyterian Church Government,” a “Directory of Public Worship,” “The Confession of Faith,” “The Larger Catechism,” and “The Shorter Catechism.” Each document was approved by the English Parliament, which then asked the assembly to add scriptural proofs.

Cromwell’s ascendancy precipitated the end of the assembly. In 1648 Presbyterian members were excluded from Parliament. King Charles I was executed in 1649 causing English Puritanism to split into two; “Presbyterians,” (who protested against Cromwell) and “Independents,” who aligned themselves with Cromwell.

In 1647, the Scottish General Assembly adopted the Westminster Standards for use in the Kirk, replacing the Scots Confession of 1560 and the Heidelberg Catechism. The standards came to New England with the Puritans (Independents) and to the Middle Atlantic states with the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. In 1729, the standards were adopted as the confessional position of the newly organized Presbyterian synod in the colonies.

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The Westminster Confession affirms God’s work from its beginning in creation to its end in resurrection and last judgment. God is first, last, and preeminent in all things. God’s people are to understand and bring their lives into accord with God’s wondrous ways and magnificent will.

The confession begins with God’s self-revelation in Scripture: God is the “*one living and true God, infinite in being and perfection, invisible, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute.*” Out of nothing, God created all that is, including

humans, whom God upholds, directs, and governs. Humans, however, did not remain in blessed harmony with God’s will. Sin’s intervention, which God permitted but did not cause, resulted in corruption of the human condition and of humans’ relationship to God.

Yet, God has made a covenant of grace with humans; through Christ, relationship to God is restored. The Christian life—nurtured by prayer, preaching, and the sacraments, prepares for God’s predetermined end of mercy and of justice.

The Westminster Catechisms

The Larger Catechism was designed as a preaching resource for the clergy. The Shorter Catechism, was written for the education of children. Both deal with questions of God, Christ, the Christian life, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, and the

Lord's Prayer. Especially famous is the first question and answer of the Shorter Catechism. "*What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*"

There are four modern confessions. None of the modern confessions are systematic or present an over-arching set of doctrines. Rather each modern confession is written from the context of a particular time and place to address a specific challenge to the faith and life of the Church at a given moment.

The Theological Declaration of Barmen

The Theological Declaration of Barmen was written by a group of church leaders in Germany to help Christians withstand the challenges of the Nazi party and of the so-called "German Christians," a popular movement that saw no conflict between Christianity and the ideals of Hitler's National Socialism.

In January 1933 Adolph Hitler was named chancellor. By playing on people's fear of communism and Bolshevism, he was able to persuade the Parliament to allow him to rule by edict. As he consolidated his power, he abolished all political rights and democratic processes: police could detain persons in prison without a trial, search private dwellings without a warrant, seize property, censor publications, tap telephones, and forbid meetings. He soon outlawed all political parties except his own, smashed labor unions, purged universities, replaced the judicial system with his own "People's Courts," initiated a systematic terrorizing of Jews, and obtained the support of church leaders allied with or sympathetic to the German Christians.

Most Germans took the union of Christianity, nationalism, and militarism for granted. Patriotic sentiments were equated with Christian truth. The 'German Christians' exalted the idea of a racially pure

nation and saw the rule of Hitler as God's will for the German people. Some in the churches resisted. Among them the theologian Karl Barth.

Following a number of regional meetings, one hundred and thirty-nine delegates from Lutheran, Reformed and United churches met in Barmen, in the city of Wuppertal from May 29–31, 1934. Among them were ordained ministers, fifty-three church members, and six university professors.

The chief item of business was discussion of a declaration to appeal to the Evangelical churches of Germany to stand firm against the German Christian accommodation to National Socialism. The Theological Declaration of Barmen contains six propositions, each quoting from Scripture, stating its implications for the present day, and rejecting the false doctrine of the German Christians.

The declaration proclaims the church's freedom in Jesus Christ who is Lord of every area of life. The church obeys him as God's one and only Word who determines its order, ministry and relation to the state. The Confessing Church, that part of the church that opposed the German Christians rallied around it.

The Confession of 1967

The preface to the Confession makes the following comments,

Confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. No one type of confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable. Obedience to Jesus Christ alone identifies the one universal church and supplies the continuity of its tradition. This obedience is the ground of

the church's duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God's providence, may demand.

The purpose of the Confession of 1967 is to call the church to the unity in confession and mission which is required of disciples today. The Confession is not a "system of doctrine," nor does it include all the traditional topics of theology. For example, the Trinity and the Person of Christ are not redefined but are recognized and reaffirmed as forming the basis and

determining the structure of the Christian faith. God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of

reconciliation to which he has called his church are the heart of this confession.

A Brief Statement of Faith

In 1983 the two largest Presbyterian churches in the United States reunited. The Plan for Reunion called for the preparation of a brief statement of the Reformed faith for possible inclusion in the Book of Confessions. This statement is not intended to stand alone, apart from other confessions of the church. It does not pretend to be a complete list of all our beliefs, nor does it explain any of them in detail. It is designed to be confessed by

the whole congregation in the setting of public worship, and to serve pastors and teachers as an aid to Christian instruction.

"A Brief Statement of Faith" lifts up concerns that call most urgently for the church's attention in our time. The church is not a refuge from the world; but rather an elect people chosen for the blessing of the nations.

The Belhar Confession

The Belhar Confession emerges from apartheid South Africa and the challenges to the Church in a context in which one race sought to systematically, legally, and spiritually elevate itself over another race. The

Belhar Confession challenges all racism and affirms the fundamental unity and dignity of all people as an expression of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Appendix B: Overview of Robert's Rules

Ten Useful Motions

1. **Motion to Amend** – changes the wording of the motion by adding/inserting or deleting/striking out words.
(Yes: must be seconded, may be debated, may be amended, may be amended, requires majority)
2. **Motion to Commit or Refer** – To commit or refer back to committee for further study and amendment allows the consultative process to be used in greater depth. When this motion is made, it needs to state clearly what committee; appointment of the committee, if necessary; the task of the committee; and report time.
(Yes: must be seconded, may be debated, may be amended, may be amended, requires majority)
3. **Motion to Postpone to a Particular Time** – This motion takes precedence over the preceding two and has the power to grant additional time to a particular member or committee or do further study or consultation.
(Yes: must be seconded, may be debated, may be amended, may be amended, requires majority)
4. **Motion to Limit Debate** – The assembly always has the power, and the moderator the right to suggest, to limit debate to a particular time duration. This is advisable in instances where the issue is highly divisive, and many members may wish to speak.
(Yes: must be seconded, may be amended, may be reconsidered; No: may be debated; requires 2/3 majority)
5. **Move the Previous Question (or Call the Question)** – The maker of the motion to move the previous question must be recognized by the moderator and the motion must receive a second. It is never in order when called from the floor. This motion should never be used to prevent legitimate debate. If approved, it ends debate and the original motion is voted upon immediately.
(Yes: must be seconded, may be reconsidered; No: may be debated, may be amended; requires 2/3 majority)
6. **Motion to Lay on the Table (or Motion to Table)** – This motion is seldom necessary and often confused with the motion to postpone. This motion is not debated; thus, the effect of this motion is to take no action and to do so without debate.
(Yes: must be seconded; No: may be debated, may be amended, may be reconsidered; requires majority)
7. **Motion to Consider by Paragraph or Seriatim** – This motion allows for a complex issue or document to be taken as several parts and is often used to clarify for the assembly the controversial aspects of a proposal.
(Yes: requires a second, may be amended; No: may be debated, may be reconsidered; requires majority)
8. **Point of Order** – This objection calls into question a point of polity and asks the moderator to address.
(No: must be seconded, may be debated, may be amended, may be reconsidered; requires moderator action)
9. **Point of Privilege** – This asks the moderator to recognize a special circumstance of the speaker to which the speaker seeks the privilege of the floor to address the assembly.
(No: must be seconded, may be debated, may be amended, may be reconsidered; requires no action)
10. **Motion to Adjourn** – This motion seeks to end the meeting and is often met with Hallelujahs. Moderators have been known to vote by calling members to prayer.
(Yes: must be seconded; No: may be debated, may be amended, may be reconsidered; requires majority)

Appendix C: Financial Best Practices 101

Administration of church finances is a sacred trust and it is important that a strong system of internal control be established. Every church should have an outline of Internal Controls that will help to train new staff, volunteers, finance committee members and clergy of what is expected of them to maintain the integrity of the organization and trust of the congregation. Internal Controls are essential to protect the assets of the church from waste, fraud, and inefficient use.

An entity's internal control over financial reporting includes those policies and procedures that (1) pertain to the maintenance of records that, in reasonable detail, accurately and fairly reflect the transactions and dispositions of the assets of the entity; (2) provide reasonable assurance that transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of financial statements and that receipts and expenditures of the entity are being made only in accordance with authorizations of management and those charged with governance; and (3) provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention, or timely detection and correction, of unauthorized acquisition, use or disposition of the entity's assets. Internal control objectives should include:

- Proper Authorization and Approval
- Proper Documentation and Accurate Recording
- Proper Physical Security
- Effective Detection

General Controls

- a. Annual budget prepared
- b. All employees screened/background checks prior to hire
- c. Employees must take an annual vacation
- d. Financials statements submitted and reviewed by the Pastor/Minister/Clergy and finance council on a monthly or at least quarterly basis.
- e. Clean and thorough explanations and documentation are retained for all journal entries.

Offertory Collection Counting

- a. Cash count procedures should be in writing and furnished to each member of the count team.
- b. Church employees and their families should not be involved with the offertory collection.
- c. No fewer than 2 unrelated individuals should count the collections and members of count teams should be rotated.
- d. The collection should be counted in a secure location.
- e. The count team should immediately restrictively endorse all checks.
- f. The count should be entered on a summary sheet and signed by all count team members.
- g. The count sheet should be prepared in ink.
- h. The count team should prepare the deposit slip in duplicate. One copy for the bank and the other for the bookkeeper.
- i. A member of the Finance Council (or equivalent) should compare the bank statement to the weekly count sheets.
- j. An annual statement should be sent to the donors.

Bank Accounts

- a. Whoever reconciles the bank statement should not be an authorized check signer on the account.
- b. All bank reconciliations should be signed by preparer and reviewer.
- c. The sequence of all check numbers should be accounted for.
- d. Examine the paid checks for the date, name, endorsement and comparing them to the cash disbursements journal (checkbook)
- e. Compare the detail of bank deposits to the cash receipts records.
- f. Investigate other reconciling items
- g. Follow up on old outstanding checks.
- h. The number of bank accounts should be kept to a minimum.

Cash Receipts

- a. The person opening the mail should be independent of the accounting records.
- b. Pre-numbered receipts should be issued to those who bring money to the office for fees/donations, etc. Receipt should contain the date, name, amount and purpose of funds and be signed by the employee/volunteer who received the funds.
- c. Receipts should be accounted for in numeric order.
- d. Deposits for various tithing and offerings should be identified by source of income.

Cash Disbursements

- a. All cash disbursements should be made by pre-numbered checks with the exception of petty cash.
- b. All bills should be approved and evidenced in writing.
- c. Blank checks should never be signed.
- d. All paid bills should be filed by vendor or by month by fiscal year.
- e. Voided checks should be marked VOID and retained.
- f. Check stock should be kept in a locked cabinet/safe and inventoried on a regular basis.
- g. All supporting documents should be given to the check signer to review before signing the check.
- h. A check to CASH should be prohibited.
- i. Individual checks should clearly identify the specific expenditure for the disbursement.
- j. Dual signature over cash disbursement for amounts over \$___ should be required.

Computer Controls

- a. All computer files should be backed up on a regular basis at minimum, weekly and should be stored off site.
- b. Passwords restrict usage of computer programs and are never shared or documented where others may find them.
- c. Password should be changed regularly and should have numbers, symbols, and characters or a combination of all.

Ministers' Terms of Call: how are they calculated?

Effective Salary: How is it calculated?

Cash to Minister	Manse	Home Owner
Annual cash salary	\$35,650.00	\$35,650.00
Housing allowance	\$ 2,000.00	\$15,000.00
Employing organization contributions*	\$ 1,400.00	
Manse	\$11,715.00	
Effective salary	\$50,765.00	\$50,650.00
Dues based on effective salary		
Dues @ 37%**	\$18,783.05	\$18,740.50
SECA offset***	\$ 3,883.52	\$ 3,874.73
Total cost to employer		
Salary + dues	\$73,431.57	\$73,265.23

*Includes manse equity allowance

**Pastor's Participation dues rate

***Not part of effective salary, if amount is less than 50% of the SECA due.



Clergy Taxes: Tax Status

Clergy Dual Tax Status	
Employee – Income Tax Purposes	Self-Employed – Social Security purposes
Receives a W-2 for Federal Income	Pays both the employer and the employee tax

Clergy Taxes: What is taxed?

Item	State Tax	Federal Income Tax (FICA)	Social Security Tax (SECA)
Cash	✓ (varies)	✓	✓
Housing	✓ (varies)		✓

Clergy Taxes: Social Security Taxes (SECA)

- SECA tax (15.3%) is levied on **all** earned income (including clergy housing allowance, manse fair rental value, utilities)
- 2.9% of SECA goes to Medicare Trust Fund
- 1/2 of SECA tax deducted from gross income for federal income tax calculations

Clergy Taxes: Income Tax & Social Security

- Clergy pay quarterly estimated SECA taxes or withhold extra federal income tax to cover SECA amount due
- Annually file IRS Schedule SE to determine SECA tax due
- If compensated by employer for any part of SECA, amount is fully subject to federal income tax & SECA

Housing Allowance: The Basics

A portion of one's salary can be designated as housing allowance to cover the fair market value of maintaining a primary residence. The housing allowance is not subject to federal income tax.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Housing allowance **is** subject to SECA



Housing Allowance: Who qualifies for it?

- Ordained active, disabled, and retired ministers in the PC(USA)
- Active & retired commissioned ruling elders granted sacramental function by a presbytery
- Ordained leaders of other religious groups
 - Seminary professors
 - Church agency employees
 - Chaplains

Housing Allowance: The Rules

- Applies only to primary residence
- Amount must be officially designated in advance
- Cannot exceed reasonable compensation, nor be set at more than 100% of salary
- Must follow the “least of 3” IRS rule.

Housing Allowance: IRS “Least of 3” Rule

The housing allowance limit is the **least** of:

- Amount employer designated in advance of payment; **or**
- Amount that is actually spent to provide primary residence; **or**
- Fair rental value*, furnished, including appurtenances + actual utilities cost

*As determined by estimate from real estate agent or comparable rental prices (e.g., Zillow, Trulia)



Appendix D: HR Best Practices 101

There is an old joke told by clergy when talking to one another: “This job would be easy were it not for the people.” Actually, multiple professions have a similar joke pertaining to their work, which is why God created personnel committees. Whether your church calls those who serve Personnel, Administration, or Human Resources, the work is the same and its purpose is,

- to ensure all legal and ecclesiastical statutes are complied with,
- to establish policies and procedures for fair and equitable employment, and
- to guide, support, and facilitate a healthy work environment that leads to effective ministry.

In order to fulfill its purpose, personnel committees craft written documents for Session approval and implement Session established, human resources best practices. Personnel policy guidelines are listed below, or you can contact the presbytery office for sample personnel policy templates your church can adapt for its use. In general, a good personnel policy will outline the following:

Employment

The Personnel policy should outline employment practices for hiring and firing that define exempt vs. non-exempt categories, full vs. part-time, and that comply with all EEO, immigration, ADA, and *Book of Order* provisions. Session is responsible for employment and termination of all lay employees as well as temporary pastoral positions. The congregation, in consultation with the presbytery, is responsible for all permanent pastoral positions.

Benefits

The personnel policy should review the benefits offered by the church, including (1) any medical insurance or retirement savings programs offered, (2) vacation and holidays, (3) how sick leave, personal time off, and family leave are accrued, and (4) how evaluations are conducted and by whom. Additional categories may be added, including conflict of interest, alcohol and drug use, sexual misconduct prevention, weapons in the workplace, allowance of flex-time, and/or sabbaticals.

Job Descriptions

The personnel policy should require job descriptions for all paid positions that specify the job title, position’s purpose, accountability, and responsibilities and that briefly describe how the person is expected to relate to others in the church (i.e. other staff, Session, and congregation) as well as how the person will be evaluated. Emphasis when creating a job description should be on writing clear and concise statements that describe observable actions using active verbs!

Annual Review

An annual review process should be required and include both performance evaluations and adequacy of compensation.

Performance Evaluations

Performance evaluation for staff: Evaluations are for the purpose of guiding professional development and/or realigning staff conduct toward more effective service. Therefore, evaluations should seek to avoid a punitive tone in favor of coaching, guidance, and clarity of what is expected. The staff person should have input into the evaluation so that it is a two-way conversation. Ordinarily, performance evaluations are conducted by the head of staff or the staff person’s direct supervisor. Personnel committee members may be asked to participate in the gathering of input for staff evaluations, although this is

not a universal practice in churches. All evaluations should be filed with the Clerk of Session for the employee's confidential file.

Performance evaluation for pastor: It is recommended that Session's read Jill Hudson's *When Better Isn't Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21st Century* (Alban Books, 2004), which suggests pastor-specific model for performance evaluation.

Compensation

Adequacy of compensation for staff: Compensation for all lay staff is approved by the Session and should be commensurate with comparable positions in the local economy.

Adequacy of compensation for ministers: Compensation for permanent pastoral positions is set by the congregation, while compensation for temporary pastoral positions is set by the Session. Presbytery sets the minimum terms of call for effective salary, which is currently set at \$52,000 per year for a full-time position. "Effective salary" is generally defined as the sum of cash salary + housing, though see the next page for a complete definition of a pastor's terms of call and preferred ways to tax-advantage the terms of call.

As part of the terms of call, ministers are allowed a housing allowance that is tax-exempt. The housing allowance includes one's mortgage or rental costs, housing related fees (e.g. title search, HOA, etc.), repairs and upgrades, and the costs of living in the home such as utilities, furnishings, yard costs but excluding food and domestic services. "The responsibility for accurate estimates of the housing allowance and payment of applicable taxes rests solely with the employee" (*Guidelines for Session Personnel Committees*, page 10). All Board of Pension and IRS requirements must be followed.

Complaints / Grievances

Complaints or grievances should be directed to the employee's direct supervisor or the head of staff, as applicable, understanding that "the personnel committee not interfere with the ongoing supervision that the head of staff provides...[working] in a supportive and counseling relationship with the head of staff and with other staff as needed." (*Guidelines, ibid.*, page 1.) Clarity about the role of the personnel committee when there is a complaint is essential to avoid the common occurrence of "triangling" in the church. The personnel committee should avoid allowing itself to be drawn into a triangle between the head of staff and employee as its primary concern is upholding the legal, policy and mission rubrics described below.

When a complaint is about the head of staff or cannot be solved in conversation with the head of staff, the employee has the right to formalize the complaint in writing to the personnel committee. As a first step, the committee should assess the grievance according to the following rubrics:

- Is the grievance a matter whose response is dictated by legal statutes (e.g. an accusation of harassment or bullying)?
- Is the grievance a matter related to Session policies and procedures?
- Is the grievance a matter related to Session defined mission, vision, objectives and goals?

If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, the personnel committee shall respond so that all employees abide by all legal statutes, Session approved policies and procedures, and Session approved mission, vision, objectives, and goals as appropriate. Grievances that allege transgression of legal statutes shall be referred to Session for action, and Session shall appoint an Investigative Committee per *Book of Order* procedures as outlined in the *Rules of Discipline*.

If the answer to all of the above questions is no, the personnel committee shall respond by coaching the employee on possible means to solve their own problem, with an emphasis on direct, open and healthy communication. The personnel committee may also respond by coaching the head of staff on ways to facilitate effective communication and management of the employee, while remaining careful to focus on process over content. (That is, focus attention on proper communication and decision-making rather than taking sides in a debate.)

The Personnel Ministry Team shall communicate their actions to the employee and to the head of staff, both in writing and in-person, and keep record of their action.

Appendix E: Additional Resources

Being Reformed: Transformational Leaders

<http://www.pcusastore.com/Products/680811/transformational-leaders-leaders-guide.aspx>

Being Reformed: Ruling Elders

<http://www.pcusastore.com/Products/680836/ruling-elders-formation-workbook-one.aspx>

Making Disciples, Making Leaders (Steve Eason, make sure you get the 2016 edition)

<http://www.wjkbooks.com/Products/0664503489/making-disciples-making-leadersleader-guide-second-edition.aspx>

Theoacademy

[NOTE: there is no “a” between theo and academy. The Theoacademy curriculum has DVD studies for new members (five sessions) and officer training (12 sessions)]

www.theoacademy.com