

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Directory for Worship

DRAFT OF REVISION

Preface

This Directory for Worship reflects the conviction that the faith, life, and worship of the church are inseparable. Its theology is based on the Bible, instructed by the *Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and attentive to ecumenical relationships. It reflects and encourages a rich heritage of traditions and diversity of cultures.

A Directory for Worship is not a service book with fixed orders of worship and collections of prayers. Rather, it describes the theology that underlies our worship, outlines appropriate forms for worship, and highlights connections between worship and Christian life, witness, and service.

This directory presents standards and norms for worship in the congregations and councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As the constitutional document ordering our worship, the Directory for Worship is authoritative for this church. At the same time, this directory is intended to suggest possibilities, invite development, and encourage ongoing reform.

Direct references to Scripture, the *Book of Confessions*, and other sections of the *Book of Order* are provided in parentheses; other biblical and confessional sources will be indicated in footnotes.

Chapter One: The Theology of Christian Worship

W-1.01: Christian Worship: An Introduction

W-1.0101: Glory to God

Christian worship gives all glory and honor, praise and thanksgiving to the holy, triune God. We are gathered in worship to glorify the God who is present and active among us—particularly through the gifts of Word and Sacrament. We are sent out in service to glorify the same God who is present and active in the world.

W-1.0102: Grace and Gratitude

God acts with grace; we respond with gratitude. This rhythm of divine action and human response—found throughout Scripture, human history, and everyday events—shapes all of Christian faith, life, and worship.

W-1.0103: God's Covenant

The Old Testament tells the story of God's steadfast love from generation to generation. To Noah and his family, to Abraham and Sarah, to Moses and Aaron, and to the house of David, God made promises of faithfulness, calling the people to respond in faith. In the fullness of time, God made a new and everlasting covenant with us through Jesus Christ.

W-1.0104: Jesus Christ

Fully human and fully divine, Jesus Christ came into the world to show God's love, to save us from sin, and to offer eternal, abundant life to all. Jesus is God's Word—spoken at creation, promised and revealed in Scripture, made flesh to dwell among us, crucified and raised in power, returning in glory to judge and reign.

Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's gracious action in history and the model for our grateful response to God. In Jesus we find the full and clear revelation of who God is; in him we also discover

1 who God is calling us to be. Therefore we worship Jesus Christ as Lord, even as he leads us in the
2 worship and service God desires.

4 **W-1.0105: The Holy Spirit**

5 The Holy Spirit manifests God's gracious action and empowers our grateful response. The Scriptures
6 describe how the Spirit moved at the dawn of creation, anointed Christ in baptism, and was poured out on
7 the church at Pentecost. The same Spirit is still at work in the life of the church and the life of the world.

8 The Holy Spirit gathers us for worship, enlightens and equips us through the Word, claims and
9 nourishes us through the Sacraments, and sends us out for service. To each member of Christ's body, the
10 Spirit gives gifts for ministry in the church and mission in the world.

12 **W-1.0106: Word and Sacrament**

13 In Christian worship Jesus Christ is truly present and active among us, by the power of the Holy Spirit,
14 through the gifts of Word and Sacrament. Wherever the Scriptures are read and proclaimed and the
15 Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are celebrated, the church bears witness to Jesus Christ, the
16 living Word. Through these means of grace, God imparts and sustains our faith, orders our common life,
17 and transforms the world. Through these same acts of worship, we share in the life of the Spirit, proclaim
18 the mystery of faith, and give glory to God.

21 **W-1.02: Time, Space, and Matter**

23 **W-1.0201: Creation and Redemption**

24 All time, space, and matter are created by God, redeemed by Christ, and made holy by the Spirit. Through
25 Christian worship—at certain times, in particular places, and with special things—we participate in God's
26 plan for the redemption of all time, space, and matter for the glory of God.

28 **W-1.0202: Time**

29 Because God is the author of history, we may worship at any time. The Old Testament records the daily
30 worship of the people of God, but teaches that one day in seven is to be set apart as holy to the Lord. The
31 Gospels all testify that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. The apostles came to speak
32 of this as the Lord's Day, alluding to the day of the Lord anticipated by the prophets.

33 The first Christians began to celebrate Jesus' resurrection every Lord's Day, gathering to
34 proclaim the Word and celebrate the Sacraments. The church continues to gather, especially on the first
35 day of the week, to hear the gospel and break bread in Jesus' name, with the confidence that the risen
36 Lord is with us.

37 Through two thousand years of Christian history, the church has developed ways of keeping time
38 in Christ—many of them adapted from the feasts and fasts of ancient Israel that Jesus kept. Through the
39 festival days of the Christian year, we mark the Lord's Nativity, Epiphany, Baptism, Transfiguration,
40 Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Reign. Other festival days, such as Maundy Thursday, Good
41 Friday, the Easter Vigil, surround the holy mystery of Jesus' dying and rising. Still others, such as Ash
42 Wednesday, the Day of Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, and All Saints Day, focus on the church's life and
43 faith. The seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter offer further opportunities for growth in faith
44 and discipleship as we prepare for or celebrate the major festivals of the Christian year.

45 The pattern of daily prayer also connects the church with the worship of ancient Israel, centuries
46 of Christian tradition, and Jesus' own practices. Whether in large assemblies, with small groups, or at
47 home, daily prayer serves as a bridge between public worship and personal affairs, helping us to live out
48 our faith each day.

49 We mark other occasions in worship, reflecting the cycles of civic and agricultural life, cultural
50 and family celebrations, the commemoration of significant persons and events, and the programs and

activities of the church. It is appropriate to observe such things, provided that they never distract from the worship of the triune God.

W-1.0203: Space

Because heaven and earth belong to God, we may worship in any place. The Old Testament describes stone altars, tabernacles, temples, and other places where the people gathered and encountered God. The Gospels tell us that Jesus worshiped at the synagogue and temple, but he also worshiped in the wilderness, on hillsides, and at lakeshores.

The first Christians worshiped at the temple and in synagogues, homes, catacombs, and prisons. The important thing was not the place, but the gathering of Christ's body—the people of God—and the presence of Christ among them in Word and Sacrament. Later the church began to build special places to meet for worship. To this day, a space for Christian worship is primarily established by the presence of the risen Lord and the communion of the Holy Spirit in the gathering of the people of God.

When a space is set apart for worship it should evoke reverence, encourage community, and be accessible to all. A space for Christian worship should include a place for the reading and proclamation of the Word, a font or pool for Baptism, and a table for the Lord's Supper. The arrangement of these things should express their relationship to one another and their centrality in Christian worship. A space for worship should not be understood as an escape from the world, but a threshold between heaven and earth.

W-1.0204: Matter

Because God created the world and called it good, we use physical things in worship. The Old Testament tells of various things that were used in the worship of God: the ark, linens and vessels, oil and incense, musical instruments, grain, fruit, and animals. At the same time, the prophets warned of the danger of idolatry: mistaking physical things for divine presence. The Gospels show how Jesus used common things—nets and fish, jars and ointment, a towel and basin, water, bread, and wine—in his ministry of teaching, healing, and feeding. On the cross, he offered his body as a living sacrifice.

The first Christians, following Jesus, took three primary elements of life—water, bread, and wine—as symbols of God's self-offering to us and our offering of ourselves to God. We have come to call these things Sacraments: signs of God's gracious action and our grateful response. Through the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, God claims us as people of the covenant and nourishes us as members of Christ's body; in turn, we pledge our loyalty to Christ and present our bodies as a living sacrifice of praise.

The offering of material gifts in worship is an expression of our self-offering, as an act of gratitude for God's grace. We give our lives to God through Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us. The practice of offering also reflects our stewardship of God's good creation. Mindful that the earth and everything in it belong to God, we present tithes and offerings for use in Christ's ministry and mission.

We offer creative gifts in worship as well, including music, art, drama, movement, media, banners, vestments, vessels, furnishings, and architecture. When such gifts only call attention to themselves, they are idolatrous; when, in their simplicity of form and function, they give glory to God, they are appropriate for worship.

W-1.03: Language, Symbols, and Culture

W-1.0301: The Word Made Flesh

God brings all things into being by the Word. By the gift of the incarnation, this same, eternal Word of God became flesh and lived among us, in a particular person in a particular time and place—Jesus of Nazareth. Our use of language, symbols, and cultural forms in Christian worship is founded on the doctrine of Jesus' incarnation. Through Jesus Christ, God speaks to us in truth and reaches out to us with grace; through Jesus Christ, we may speak truthfully to God and lift up our hearts with gratitude.

W-1.0302: Language

The mystery and reality of God transcends our experience, understanding, and speech, such that we cannot reduce God to our ways of speaking. Yet we are compelled to speak of the goodness, grace, and glory of the God who is revealed in the world around us, in Scripture, and above all, in Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament speaks of God in personal ways, as creator, covenant-maker, comforter, liberator, judge, redeemer, shepherd, sovereign, bearer, begetter. It addresses God as “Lord,” a word that conveys the sovereignty of God while standing in for the hidden name revealed to Moses at the burning bush. It also borrows images from nature, describing God as rock, well-spring, fire, light, eagle, hen, lion. The Gospels show how Jesus used and adapted these images when speaking to and about God, particularly in his intimate use of Abba, Father. He also claimed some of these terms in speaking about himself—as good shepherd, bridegroom, and Son of Man. New Testament writers continued to use and adapt Old Testament language in speaking about Jesus—especially in their use of “Lord” to convey his sovereignty over the powers of this world, and to connect him to the Holy One of Israel.

Language that faithfully describes and addresses God in worship is expansive, drawing from the full breadth and depth of biblical terms and images for the triune God as it remains faithful to the witness of Scripture. Language that describes and addresses the people of God is inclusive, respecting the diversity of persons, cultures, backgrounds, and experiences of the gathered community. Furthermore, the words we use in worship should be in the common language or languages of those who are gathered, so that all are able to receive good news and respond with authentic expressions of their faith.

W-1.0303: Symbols

Certain biblical images have come to have deeper significance, multiple associations, and lasting meaning for the people of God. We call these symbols. There are numerous examples in the Old Testament—tree, temple, rainbow, river, sheep, scroll, building, body. New Testament writers drew on this deep reservoir of common meaning to convey their understanding of Christ, the gospel, the church, and the realm of God. Certain prominent symbols from Scripture, such as light, book, water, bread, cup, and cross, play an important role in Christian worship. Such things are not objects to be worshiped, but signs that point to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

We come to know God’s Word more fully when it is both proclaimed and enacted in worship. The Old Testament describes symbolic actions in the worship of ancient Israel—fasting and feasting, rejoicing and lamenting, dancing and singing, marking and anointing, cleansing and offering, doing justice and showing mercy. The Gospels demonstrate how Jesus brought new meaning to existing practices of faith—especially baptism and breaking bread—and transformed ordinary acts of compassion—healing the sick, giving alms to the poor, feeding the hungry, and washing feet—into new ways of serving God. Christian worship includes a variety of symbolic actions, with strong ties to these and other biblical practices—gathering and sending, kneeling and standing, speaking and singing, cleansing and offering, marking and anointing, eating and drinking, blessing and laying on of hands. These things convey the gracious action of God, and communicate our grateful response.

W-1.0304: Culture

From its beginning at Pentecost, the church of Jesus Christ has been a community of many cultures and languages, united by the power of the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts and the New Testament epistles record the challenges and controversies of an emerging church that would be “neither Jew nor Greek,” but one in Jesus Christ. As the church has grown and spread over two thousand years, it has taken root and flourished in cultures and lands all around the globe—bearing witness to the love of God for all the world and Christ’s sovereignty in every place. Finally, from the book of Revelation, we know that the company of the redeemed will be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, and people, singing praise to the Lamb of God.

Christian worship is, by its very nature, a cross-cultural event. It emerges from the context of a particular congregation and community. Faithful worship is sensitive to the diversity of traditions and

1 cultures within and beyond the church, incorporating the words, images, symbols, and actions that best
2 convey the good news of Jesus Christ in a particular gathering of God's people. Furthermore, whenever
3 and wherever we gather in Jesus' name, we join the praise and prayer of the people of God in every time
4 and place. Therefore, it is fitting that we share stories and sing songs from cultures other than our own as
5 we pray for the church throughout the world.

8 **Chapter Two: The Ordering of Reformed Worship**

11 **W-2.01: Sources and Principles**

13 **W-2.0101: Sources of Order**

14 Reformed worship is to be faithful to the Holy Spirit who speaks in Scripture. The witness of Scripture
15 provides the church's preeminent, authoritative source for the ordering of worship. Those responsible for
16 planning and leading worship should also be guided by the wider traditions of the universal church, the
17 wisdom of our Reformed tradition, the culture and context of the worshiping community, and the
18 constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

20 **W-2.0102: Form and Freedom**

21 Christian worship has always been marked by a tension between form and freedom. Some traditions have
22 emphasized established orders of worship, seeking to be faithful to the Scriptures. Others have resisted
23 fixed forms of worship, asserting our freedom in Christ. We acknowledge that all forms of worship are
24 provisional and subject to reformation. Fixed forms of worship are valuable in that they offer consistent
25 patterns and practices that help to shape lives of faith and faithfulness. More spontaneous approaches to
26 worship are valuable in that they provide space for unexpected insight and inspiration. In whatever form it
27 takes, worship is to be ordered by God's Word and open to the creativity of the Holy Spirit. (F-1.04)

30 **W-2.02: The Worshiping Assembly**

32 **W-2.0201: A Royal Priesthood**

33 In Jesus Christ, the church is called to be a royal priesthood, devoted to the service of God in the world.
34 Worship is a collective activity of the people of God and an expression of our common life and ministry.
35 It demands the full and active participation of the whole body of Christ, with heart, mind, soul, and
36 strength. (G-1.03)

37 The ordering of worship should reflect the richness of cultural diversity in the congregation and
38 the local context in which it ministers. The order of worship should provide for and encourage the
39 participation of all; no one should be excluded.

40 Children and youth bring special gifts and grow in their faith through their regular participation in
41 the church's worship. Those who plan and lead worship should provide for their full participation in the
42 Service for the Lord's Day.

44 **W-2.0202: Prayerful Participation**

45 Prayer is a gift from God, who desires dialogue and relationship with us. It is a posture of faith and a way
46 of living in the world. Prayer is also the primary way in which we participate in worship. Christian prayer
47 is offered through Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Faithful prayer is shaped by God's
48 Word in Scripture and inspires us to join God's work in the world.

49 There are many kinds of prayer—adoration, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, intercession,
50 dedication. There are many ways to pray—listening and waiting for God, remembering God's gracious

1 acts, crying out to God for help, or offering oneself to God. Prayer may be spoken, silent, sung, or enacted
2 in physical ways.

3 The singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is a vital and ancient form of prayer. Singing
4 engages the whole person, and helps to unite the body of Christ in common worship. The congregation
5 itself is the church's primary choir; the purpose of rehearsed choirs and other musicians is to lead and
6 support the congregation in the singing of prayer. Special songs, anthems, and instrumental music may
7 also serve to interpret the word and enhance the congregation's prayer. Furthermore, many of the
8 elements of the service of worship may be sung. Music in worship is always to be an offering to God, not
9 merely an artistic display, source of entertainment, or cover for silence.

10 Participation in worship may involve a range of other actions: kneeling, bowing, standing, lifting
11 hands; dancing, drumming, clapping, embracing, or joining hands; anointing and laying on of hands.

12 The gifts of the Spirit are for building up the church. Every action in worship should glorify God
13 and contribute to the good of the people. Worshipers and worship leaders should avoid actions that only
14 call attention to themselves and fail to serve the needs of the whole congregation.

17 **W-2.03: Ordered Ministries and Leadership in Worship**

19 **W-2.0301: Gifts for Service**

20 By their gifts and training, some members of the church are called to particular acts of leadership in
21 worship and have particular responsibilities for ordering the service. These specific roles and
22 responsibilities are undertaken in service to God and to the congregation, and should in no way diminish
23 or overshadow the primary participation of the worshipping assembly. (G-1.03, G-2.01)

25 **W-2.0302: Deacons**

26 Deacons are called to lead the congregation in witness, compassion, and service. While deacons have no
27 particular responsibilities for the ordering of worship, the session should ensure that deacons have regular
28 opportunities to lead in worship, and that their ministries of service, compassion, and witness are reflected
29 in the public services of the church.

30 In the Service for the Lord's Day, it is especially appropriate for deacons to read Scripture, lead
31 the prayers of the people, prepare the table for the Lord's Supper, and offer the charge at the conclusion
32 of worship. (G-2.02)

34 **W-2.0303: Ruling Elders**

35 Ruling elders are called to nurture the common life of the people of God through their gifts of
36 discernment and governance. In a particular congregation, they provide for the church's worship and
37 encourage the people's participation.

38 Specifically, when serving together on the session, ruling elders and pastors: make provision for
39 the regular preaching of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments, corporate prayer, and the offering of
40 praise to God in song; oversee and approve all public worship in the congregation, with the exception of
41 responsibilities reserved for the pastor; determine occasions, days, times, and places for worship; and
42 have responsibility for the arrangement of worship space, the use of special appointments (flowers,
43 candles, banners, paraments, and other objects), and the ministries of music, drama, dance, and visual
44 arts.

45 In the Service for the Lord's Day, it is especially appropriate for ruling elders to lead the call to
46 worship, read Scripture, lead in prayer, receive the offering, serve communion and assist at baptisms, and
47 offer the charge at the conclusion of worship. Ruling elders should also cultivate an ability to teach the
48 Word, when called upon to do so. (G-2.03, G-3.02)

W-2.0304: Teaching Elders

Teaching elders (also called ministers of Word and Sacrament) are called to proclaim the Word, preside at the Sacraments, and equip the people for ministry in Jesus' name. Specifically, teaching elders are responsible for: the selection of Scriptures to be read, the preparation of the liturgy and sermon, the selection of congregational songs, and the use of drama, dance, and other art forms in a particular service of worship.

In the Service for the Lord's Day, a teaching elder is responsible for proclaiming the Word and presiding at Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is especially appropriate for teaching elders to speak the declaration of forgiveness and offer the blessing at the conclusion of worship; like the Word and Sacraments, these are focused expressions of the good news of the gospel. (G-2.05)

W-2.0305: Shared Responsibility and Accountability

In a particular congregation, the order of worship, including printed worship aids or media presentations for a given service, is the responsibility of the teaching elder 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 pastor, and in consultation with church musicians and educators. (G-2.05, G-3.02)

The teaching elder may confer with a worship committee in planning particular services. Where there is a music leader or choir director, the teaching elder will confer with that person on anthems and other musical offerings; the session will see that these conferences take place appropriately and on a regular basis. (G-2.05)

The session is responsible for educating the congregation about the church's worship, in order to facilitate their full and active participation. The session should also provide for the regular study of this Directory for Worship, particularly in the training of ruling elders and deacons. (G-3.02)

In fulfilling their responsibilities for worship, sessions are accountable to presbytery. Presbyteries should 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. Presbyteries should provide instruction in worship, making use of this Directory for Worship in educational events for congregations, the preparation of candidates for ordination, and in the ongoing nurture of teaching elders. (G-3.03)

Chapter Three: The Service for the Lord's Day

W-3.01: Worship on the Lord's Day

W-3.0101: The Day of Resurrection

We gather to worship God on the Lord's Day (Sunday) because the gospels testify that Jesus rose from the dead early on the first day of the week. The Lord's Day is also called the "eighth day" of creation, a sign of the new creation that has begun with Christ's resurrection. While we may worship God on any day and at any time, every Sunday service is a celebration of Christ's resurrection and an anticipation of the fullness of God's coming reign.

W-3.0102: Word and Sacrament

The Service for the Lord's Day is a service of Word and Sacrament. We meet in the presence of the living Lord, who appeared to his disciples on the first day of the week—the day he rose from the dead—to interpret the Scriptures and break bread. Following Jesus' example, the church proclaims the fullness of the gospel in Word and Sacrament on the Lord's Day.

The Service for the Lord's Day includes other actions as well: gathering and singing, confession and pardon, prayer and offering, blessing and sending. Through all of these actions, we are drawn into Christ's presence and sent out in the power of the Spirit.

W-3.0103: The Order of Worship

An order of worship offers a meaningful and reliable structure for the church's encounter with the living God. Over time, an order of worship helps to shape our faith and faithfulness as the people of God, becoming a pattern for how we live as Christians in the world.

The order of worship offered here for the Service for the Lord's Day is rooted in Scripture, the traditions of the universal church, and our Reformed heritage. In particular, it seeks to uphold the centrality of Word and Sacraments in the church's faith, life, and worship. Other orders of worship may well be appropriate in the context of a particular congregation or culture, provided that they are faithful to the Word, open to the Spirit, and dedicated to the glory of God.

W-3.02: Gathering

W-3.0201: Preparing for Worship

Worship begins as the people gather—greeting one another, praying in silence, sharing announcements, or offering music to the glory of God. The act of assembling in Jesus' name bears witness to the church's identity and mission as Christ's body in the world.

W-3.0202: Opening Sentences

A call to worship, typically drawn from sentences of Scripture, expresses God's invitation to gather as Christ's body in this place. This action may include a greeting in the name of Jesus Christ or the triune God. Because the session is responsible for the nurture of the community, as well as the oversight of times and places for worship, it is especially appropriate for a ruling elder to lead the call to worship.

W-3.0203: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

For millennia the people of God have sung psalms as praise and prayer to God. Early Christians continued to sing, pray, and study the psalms, interpreting them in the light of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Singing psalms remains an important part of the Reformed heritage. To the psalms the church began to add other hymns, canticles, and spiritual songs. Through the ages and from varied cultures, the church has developed many other forms of congregational song, accompanied by a great array of instruments. We draw from this rich repertoire in the Service for the Lord's Day, singing glory to God.

W-3.0204: Opening Prayer

An opening prayer may be offered, giving thanks and praise to God, expressing joy in the presence of Christ, and calling on the gifts of the Spirit for the gathered community. Alternately, a prayer of the day may introduce primary themes and biblical images for the service that follows.

W-3.0205: Confession and Pardon

Having praised the holiness of God, we must also face the sinful state of the world and of our lives, confessing our unworthiness to enter into God's presence. This turn from praise to confession, emphasized in the Service for the Lord's Day, is one of the hallmarks of the Reformed tradition.

A call to confession expresses God's initiative in calling for repentance and promising grace. We approach God with confidence, confessing the reality of sin, captivity, and brokenness in personal and common life and asking for God's saving grace. The prayer of confession may include the singing of a prayer for grace, such as "Lord, have mercy." A declaration of forgiveness proclaims the good news of God's mercy and offers the assurance of pardon in Jesus' name. Leading this element of worship from the font connects our confession with the grace and cleansing of Baptism, and the baptismal call to new life in Christ. Because of these associations with the ministry of Word and Sacrament, it is especially appropriate for a teaching elder to lead the confession and pardon.

Other actions may follow—a song of praise, such as “Glory be to the Father” or “Glory to God”; a summary of the law or call to faithfulness; and the sharing of peace as a sign of reconciliation in Christ.

W-3.03: Word

W-3.0301: Theology of Proclamation

The Scriptures bear witness to the Word of God, revealed most fully in Jesus Christ, the Word who “became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). Where the Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the living Word is present by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the reading, hearing, preaching, and affirming of the Word are central to Christian worship and essential to the Service for the Lord’s Day.

A teaching elder is responsible for the selection of Scriptures to be read in public worship. Selected readings should be drawn from both Old and New Testaments, and over a period of time should reflect the full message of Scripture. Selections for readings should be guided by the seasons and festivals of the Christian year, events in the world, and pastoral concerns in the local congregation. Schedules of readings, such as the Revised Common Lectionary, ensure a broad range of biblical texts as well as consistency and connection with the universal church. The teaching elder is also responsible for the version of the Bible to be used in public worship. The Scriptures should be read in the common language(s) of the worshiping community. The congregation should be informed of significant adaptations, paraphrases, or new translations.

The Word proclaimed is to be based on the Word written in Scripture. Preaching requires diligence and discernment in the study of Scripture, listening for the voice of God through the discipline of daily prayer, theological reflection on the message of the gospel, sensitivity to the context of the congregation, attentiveness to what the Spirit is saying to the church, awareness of events in the world, and consistent and personal obedience to Jesus Christ. The sermon should present the gospel with clarity and simplicity, in language that all can understand. The gifts of song, drama, dance, and visual art may be employed in the proclamation of the Word. These other forms of proclamation should be overseen by the session, to ensure that the gospel is presented faithfully. (G-2.03, G-3.02)

We respond to the proclamation of the Word in a variety of ways: confessing the faith of the church, celebrating or reaffirming the Sacrament of Baptism, praying for the church and world, and offering our lives in gratitude for God’s grace. The proclamation of the Word is incomplete if it fails to evoke the response of the people of God. When the Word is proclaimed, we are called, above all, to discern Jesus Christ, receive his grace, and respond to his call with obedience. All of these things depend on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, whom we seek in prayer.

W-3.0302: Prayer for Illumination

A prayer for illumination calls on the Holy Spirit to empower the reading, understanding, proclaiming, and living of God’s Word. This sense of utter reliance on the illumination of the Spirit is an important and distinctive mark of the Reformed tradition. The prayer for illumination precedes the reading of Scripture and preaching of the sermon and applies to all of the readings, as well as the proclamation of the Word.

W-3.0303: Scripture

The public reading of Scripture should be clear, audible, and attentive to the meaning of the text. The session should ensure that readers are prepared for this important ministry. Reading from the church’s Bible, as opposed to loose sheets of paper, conveys a sense of the permanence and weight of the Word of God, and demonstrates the communal nature of the biblical story.

Anyone may be invited to read Scripture, including children and youth. Because deacons are charged with the ministry of witness to the gospel, and ruling elders are responsible for providing for the proclamation of the Word, it is especially appropriate for a deacon or ruling elder to read Scripture.

The role of the congregation is to listen prayerfully, actively, and attentively to the Word that is read and proclaimed. Listening requires expectation, concentration, and imagination. The congregation

1 may also participate in the presentation of Scripture through unison, responsive, or antiphonal readings, or
2 by following along with printed or projected materials. Spoken responses may conclude the reading of
3 Scripture.
4

5 **W-3.0304: Musical Responses**

6 Psalms, canticles, anthems, alleluias, songs of praise, or other musical responses may accompany the
7 reading of the Word. In the design of the Revised Common Lectionary, the psalm for the day is intended
8 to be a sung response to the first Scripture reading (Old Testament or, in Easter, Acts), giving the
9 congregation an opportunity to reflect on and pray from that text.
10

11 **W-3.0305: Sermon**

12 A sermon, based on the Scripture(s) read in worship, proclaims the good news of the risen Lord and
13 presents the gift and calling of the gospel. Through the sermon, we are instructed by God's Word,
14 equipped to follow Christ more faithfully, and inspired to proclaim the gospel in our own words and
15 deeds. The sermon may conclude with prayer, an ascription of praise, or a call to discipleship. In keeping
16 with the ministry of Word and Sacrament, a teaching elder ordinarily preaches the sermon.
17

18 **W-3.0306: Affirmation of Faith**

19 Responding to the Word proclaimed, we affirm our faith in the holy, triune God. This affirmation of faith
20 is drawn from sentences of Scripture or the creeds, confessions, and catechisms of the church. A
21 congregational song, anthem, or other musical response may serve as an affirmation of faith.
22 Opportunities for personal testimony may also be provided at this time. When Baptism or the
23 reaffirmation of Baptism is to take place, the Apostles' Creed is spoken in the context of the baptismal
24 liturgy. The Nicene Creed, our most ancient and universal confession of faith, is especially appropriate
25 when the Lord's Supper is celebrated.
26

27 **W-3.0307: Baptism and Baptismal Discipleship**

28 The Sacrament of Baptism (W-3.0402–W.0408) and other services associated with the baptismal
29 covenant take place as a response to the Word. Such services include the reaffirmation of baptism on
30 profession of faith (W-4.0203), the reception of new members (W-4.0204), commissioning for service
31 (W-4.03), ordination and installation to ordered ministry (W-4.04), transitions in life or ministry (W-
32 4.05), commemorations of communal events, Christian marriage (W-4.06), and witness to the resurrection
33 (W-4.07). An invitation to discipleship may also be spoken at this time, calling worshipers to be baptized
34 or to live into the promises of their baptism.
35

36 **W-3.0308: Prayers of the People**

37 In response to the Word, we pray for the world God so loves—joining Christ's own ministry of
38 intercession and the sighs of the Spirit, too deep for words. These prayers are not the work of a single
39 leader, but an act of the whole congregation as Christ's royal priesthood. They are to be voiced in such a
40 way that the whole church may say "amen."

41 Prayers of intercession and supplication are offered for: the mission and ministry of the universal
42 church and the local congregation; care of creation and the right use of resources; peace and justice in the
43 world; the leaders and peoples of all nations; the poor, hungry, and oppressed; compassion and
44 reconciliation in the local community; healing and wholeness for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit;
45 and other special needs. These prayers may be led from the communion table or from the midst of the
46 congregation. They may include musical responses or symbolic action.

47 Because deacons are responsible for ministries of compassion and ruling elders are charged with
48 the nurture of the congregation, it is especially appropriate for a deacon or ruling elder to lead the prayers
49 of the people.
50
51

W-3.04: Sacrament

W-3.0401: Theology of the Sacraments

The Sacraments are the Word of God enacted and sealed in the life of the church, the body of Christ. Sacraments are gracious acts of God, by which Christ Jesus offers his life to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Sacraments are also human acts of gratitude, by which we offer our lives to God in love and service. Sacraments are both physical signs and spiritual gifts, including words and actions, surrounded by prayer, in the context of the church's common worship. They employ ordinary things—the basic elements of water, bread, and wine—in proclaiming the extraordinary love of God. The Reformed tradition recognizes the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (also called Eucharist or Holy Communion) as having been instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ through the witness of the Scriptures and sustained through the history of the universal church.

W-3.0402: Theology of Baptism

Baptism is the sign and seal of our incorporation into Jesus Christ. In his own baptism, Jesus identified himself with sinners—yet God claimed him as a beloved Son, and sent the Holy Spirit to anoint him for service. In his ministry, Jesus offered the gift of living water. Through the baptism of his suffering and death, Jesus set us free from the power of sin forever. After he rose from the dead, Jesus commissioned his followers to go and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey his commands. The disciples were empowered by the outpouring of the Spirit to continue Jesus' mission and ministry, inviting others to join this new way of life in Christ. As Paul wrote, through the gift of Baptism we are “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11).

The Sacrament of Baptism holds a deep reservoir of theological meaning, including: dying and rising with Jesus Christ; pardon, cleansing, and renewal; the gift of the Holy Spirit; incorporation into the body of Christ; and a sign of the realm of God. The Reformed tradition understands Baptism to be a sign of God's covenant. The water of Baptism flows from the waters of creation, the flood, and the exodus. Baptism thus connects us with God's creative purpose, cleansing power, and redemptive promise from generation to generation. Like circumcision, a sign of God's gracious covenant with Israel, Baptism is a sign of God's gracious covenant with the church. In this new covenant of grace we are washed clean and are made holy and whole. Baptism also represents God's call to justice and righteousness, rolling down like a mighty stream, and the river of the water of life, flowing from God's throne.

Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is God's gift of grace and also God's call to respond to that grace. Baptism calls us to repentance, faithfulness, and discipleship. Baptism gives the church its identity and commissions the church for service in the world.

Baptism is the bond of unity in Jesus Christ. When we are baptized, we are made one with Christ, with one another, and with the church of every time and place. In Christ, barriers of race, status, and gender are overcome; we are called to seek reconciliation in the church and world, in Jesus' name.

Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love. The baptism of believers witnesses to the truth that God's gift of grace calls for our grateful response. The baptism of our children witnesses to the truth that God claims people in love even before they are able to respond in faith. These two forms of witness are one and the same Sacrament.

God's faithfulness to us is sure, even when human faithfulness to God is not. God's grace is sufficient; therefore baptism is not repeated. There are many times in worship, however, when we may remember the gift of our baptism and acknowledge the grace of God continually at work in us. These may include: profession of faith; when participating in another's baptism; when joining or leaving a church; at an ordination, installation, or commissioning; and at each celebration of the Lord's Supper. Indeed, Baptism calls for development in faith and decision at every stage of life's way as we seek to respond with gratitude to God's gift of grace.

Baptism is to be celebrated on the Lord's Day, along with the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in the company of the whole congregation. The presence of the

covenant community bears witness to the one body of Christ, into whom we are baptized. When extraordinary circumstances call for the administration of Baptism apart from public worship, the congregation should be represented by one or more members of the session.

As there is one body, there is one Baptism. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recognizes all baptisms by other Christian churches that are administered with water and performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

W-3.0403: Responsibility for Baptism

Baptism is to be overseen by the session and administered by a teaching elder or ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service. The session's responsibilities for Baptism include: encouraging parents to present their children for Baptism without undue haste or undue delay; encouraging new believers to be baptized; examining candidates for Baptism, or their parents or guardians, and instructing them in the significance of the Sacrament; enrolling those who are baptized as members of the congregation; and providing for their ongoing nurture and formation. The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the universal church, is responsible for nurturing baptized persons in Christian life. The session may designate certain members of the congregation as sponsors or mentors for those who are baptized or for their parents or guardians. (G-2.05, G-2.10, G-3.02)

When a child is presented for Baptism at least one parent or guardian will be an active member of a particular congregation, normally the one in which the baptism takes place. The session may consider a request to baptize a child whose parent or guardian is an active member of another congregation. If the session approves such a request, it must consult with the council of the other congregation and notify them when the Sacrament has been administered. Those presenting children for Baptism will promise to nurture and guide them until they are ready to make a personal profession of faith and assume the responsibility of active church membership. (G-1.04)

A council may authorize a teaching elder to preside at Baptism in certain situations beyond the congregational setting, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, military bases, and new worshiping communities. In these cases, the teaching elder is responsible for ensuring that the newly baptized person is enrolled as a member of a congregation. (G-3.02, G-3.03)

W-3.0404: Presentation

Following the sermon, the teaching elder introduces the Sacrament of Baptism with sentences of Scripture; other sentences of Scripture may be spoken by ruling elders, members of the congregation, or ecumenical witnesses. On behalf of the session, a ruling elder presents each candidate for Baptism. Those desiring baptism for their children or themselves express their intent to receive the sacrament. Parents or guardians, sponsors (if applicable), and the congregation make vows to support and nurture those being baptized. No one comes to Baptism alone; we are encouraged by family or friends and surrounded by the community of faith.

W-3.0405: Profession of Faith

Candidates for baptism or their parents or guardians renounce evil and profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Those who are being baptized upon profession of faith declare their intent to participate actively and responsibly in the worship and mission of the church. They join the congregation in professing their faith, using the Apostles' Creed, the ancient baptismal affirmation of the early church.

W-3.0406: Thanksgiving Over the Water

At the place of baptism, a teaching elder leads the people in prayer: giving thanks for God's covenant faithfulness through history; praising God's gracious and reconciling action in Jesus Christ; and asking the Holy Spirit to attend and empower the baptism, give deliverance and rebirth, and equip the church for faithfulness.

W-3.0407: The Act of Baptism

Accompanied by a visible and generous use of water, the teaching elder addresses each person by their Christian or given name, and says: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The water used for Baptism should be from a local source, and may be applied by pouring or immersion.

Other actions signifying the gift of the Holy Spirit, such as the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, may be included. However, the central act of baptizing with water in the name of the triune God must not be overshadowed.

W-3.0408: Welcome

The newly baptized person is welcomed as a member of the church, the body of Christ. Appropriate gifts may be given, such as a candle (reflecting the light of Christ) or a baptismal garment (signifying being clothed with Christ). The peace of Christ may be exchanged. The Lord’s Supper appropriately follows; those who have just been baptized may be invited to receive communion first.

W-3.0409: Theology of the Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper (or Eucharist) is the sign and seal of our communion with the crucified and risen Lord. Jesus shared meals with his followers throughout his earthly life and ministry—common suppers, miraculous feasts, and the covenant commemorations of Israel, in which the people ate and drank in the presence of the Lord, rejoicing. Jesus spoke of himself as the bread of life, and the true vine, in whom we are branches. On the night before his death, Jesus met with his disciples to share bread and wine, speaking of them as his body and blood, signs of the new covenant. He told them to keep this feast, remembering him. On the day of his resurrection, Jesus made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of the bread. The disciples continued to devote themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, prayers, and the common meal. As Paul wrote, as often as we share this bread and cup, we “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper offers an abundant feast of theological meaning, including: thanksgiving to God the Father; remembrance of Jesus Christ; invocation of the Holy Spirit; communion in the body of Christ; and a meal of the realm of God. The Reformed tradition understands the Lord’s Supper to be a sign of God’s covenant. The bread of the Lord’s Supper is linked with the bread of Passover and the gift of manna in the wilderness. The Lord’s Supper thus connects us with God’s saving power and providential care from generation to generation. Like the offering of sacrifices, a sign of Israel’s thanksgiving for God’s faithfulness, the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice of praise and a sign of our gratitude for God’s steadfast love. The Lord’s Supper represents God’s gracious invitation to an everlasting covenant. The Lord’s Supper also reflects our calling to feed others as we have been fed, and offers a foretaste of that heavenly banquet when God will wipe away every tear and swallow up death forever.

The Lord’s Supper enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God’s sustaining grace offered to all people. The Lord’s Supper is God’s gift of grace and also God’s call to respond to that grace. The Lord’s Supper nourishes us in righteousness, faithfulness, and discipleship. The Lord’s Supper renews the church in its identity and sends the church to mission in the world.

When we gather at the Lord’s Supper we are drawn into the presence of Christ and united with the church in every place. We join with all the faithful in heaven and on earth in offering thanksgiving to the triune God. We renew the vows we have taken in our baptism, and recommit ourselves to love and serve God, one another, and our neighbors in the world.

The opportunity to eat and drink with Christ is not a right bestowed upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love. All who come to the table are offered the bread and cup, regardless of their age or understanding. If some of those who come have not yet been baptized, an invitation to baptismal preparation and baptism should be graciously extended.

1 Worshippers prepare themselves to celebrate the Lord's Supper by putting their trust in Christ,
2 confessing their sin, and seeking reconciliation with God and one another. Even those who doubt may
3 come to the table in order to be assured of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ.

4 The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated as a regular part of the Service for the Lord's Day,
5 preceded by the proclamation of the Word, in the company of the whole congregation. When local
6 circumstances call for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated less frequently, the session may approve other
7 schedules for celebration, in no case less than quarterly. If the Lord's Supper is celebrated less frequently
8 than on each Lord's Day, public notice is to be given at least one week in advance so that all may prepare
9 to receive the sacrament.

11 **W-3.0410: Responsibility for the Lord's Supper**

12 The Lord's Supper is to be overseen by the session and administered by a teaching elder or ruling elder
13 commissioned to pastoral service. The session may authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper at
14 events other than the Service for the Lord's Day, including services of Christian marriage, ordination and
15 installation, services of wholeness, ministry to the sick, and services of witness to the resurrection. At all
16 such events, the Word is to be read and proclaimed. Even when such services involve only a few
17 members of the congregation, the Lord's Supper is to be understood as an act of the whole church, not a
18 private ceremony. (G-2.05, G-2.10, G-3.02)

19 A council may authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper in certain situations beyond the
20 congregational setting, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, military bases, and new church developments.
21 (G-3.02, G-3.03)

23 **W-3.0411: Offering**

24 Christian life is an offering of one's self to God. In the Lord's Supper we are presented with the costly
25 self-offering of Jesus Christ for the life of the world. As those who have been claimed and set free by his
26 grace, we respond with gratitude, offering him our lives, our spiritual gifts, and our material goods. Every
27 service of worship should include an opportunity to respond to Christ's call to discipleship through self-
28 offering. The gifts we offer express our stewardship of creation, demonstrate our care for one another,
29 support the ministries of the church, and provide for the needs of the poor.

30 Tithes and offerings are gathered as an act of thanksgiving to God. Gifts of food for the poor may
31 also be collected at this time, and the table may be prepared for the Lord's Supper. All of these gifts are
32 received with a prayer of dedication to God, spoken or sung. Because ruling elders and deacons are
33 charged with the stewardship of the church's resources and leadership in ministry to the poor, it is
34 especially appropriate for a ruling elder or deacon to lead this prayer. Signs of Christ's peace and
35 reconciliation may be exchanged, if this did not take place earlier in the service.

37 **W-3.0412: Great Thanksgiving**

38 Following the offering and the preparation of the table, a teaching elder may invite worshippers to the
39 Lord's Supper with sentences of Scripture. At the table, the teaching elder leads the people in a three-fold
40 prayer to the triune God: giving thanks for God's creative power, providential care, and covenant
41 faithfulness, along with particular blessings of the day; remembering God's acts of salvation through
42 Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promised return, as well as his institution of the
43 Sacrament (if not otherwise spoken at the invitation to the table or the breaking of the bread); and calling
44 on the Holy Spirit to draw worshippers into the presence of the risen Lord, nourish them in the body and
45 blood of Christ, unite them with Christ in the communion of saints and the church in every place, and
46 send them in mission to the world. The prayer ends with an ascription of praise to the triune God. Musical
47 acclamations, such as "Holy, holy, holy," "Christ has died," and "Amen," may be included. The Lord's
48 Prayer follows.

W-3.0413: Breaking the Bread

In full view of the people, the teaching elder breaks the bread and pours the cup, or lifts a cup that has already been filled. These actions may be accompanied by sentences of Scripture or performed in silence. The use of one loaf and one cup expresses the unity of the body of Christ and the communal nature of the sacrament. The bread used for the Lord's Supper should be common to the culture of the congregation; those who prepare the bread should make provision for persons with food allergies. The session will determine what form of the fruit of the vine is used; a non-alcoholic option should always be provided.

W-3.0414: Communion

The bread and cup are shared in the manner most appropriate to the occasion. Worshipers may gather at the table, come forward to meet the servers, or receive the bread and cup where they are. The bread may be broken and placed in people's hands or they may receive pieces of bread prepared for distribution. They may drink from a common cup, receive individual cups, or dip the broken bread into the cup. Ordinarily ruling elders, deacons, and teaching elders serve the bread and cup; the session may authorize other church members to do so. While the bread and cup are shared worshipers may sing; other music may be offered; appropriate passages of Scripture may be read; or the people may pray in silence.

When all have received the bread and cup the remaining elements are placed on the table. The teaching elder then leads the people in prayer, thanking God for the gift of the Sacrament and asking for grace to live and serve faithfully until the coming of Christ's realm in fullness.

Immediately after the service, the bread and cup may be shared with absent, homebound, or hospitalized members by two or more persons in ordered ministry. Those who carry out this extended service of communion should be authorized by the session; equipped with the necessary theological, pastoral, and liturgical gifts and resources; and instructed to maintain the unity of Word and Sacrament through the reading of Scripture and offering of prayers.

At the conclusion of the Service for the Lord's Day, the bread and cup should be removed from the table and used or disposed of in a manner approved by the session, in keeping with the Reformed understanding of the Sacrament and principles of good stewardship.

W-3.0415: If the Lord's Supper Is Omitted

The Lord's Supper is integral to the Service for the Lord's Day, a service of Word and Sacrament. If, in local circumstances and by the decision of the session, the Lord's Supper is to be omitted from Sunday worship, the service continues after the prayers of the people with the offering and a prayer of thanksgiving and dedication, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

W-3.05: Sending

W-3.0501: Acts of Commitment

In response to the Word we have received in the Sacraments, we affirm Christ's call to discipleship through acts of commitment. Such acts of commitment may include: closing hymns, psalms, or spiritual songs that send us out to live the gospel by God's grace; creative or symbolic actions expressing our resolve to share in Christ's mission; declarations of intent to prepare for or desire to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, or to reaffirm the baptismal covenant; commissioning to ministries of evangelism, compassion, justice, and reconciliation; farewells to members of the church who are departing; and brief invitations or announcements related to the church's mission.

W-3.0502: Blessing and Charge

The Service for the Lord's Day concludes with a blessing in the name of the triune God, such as the priestly blessing or apostolic benediction. Because this blessing is an expression of the gospel of God's grace and an extension of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament, a teaching elder ordinarily speaks the blessing.

1 We are blessed in order to be a blessing to others. The charge to the people calls the church to go
2 forth as agents of God's mission in the world. Because deacons are responsible for the church's ministry
3 of witness and service, and ruling elders have oversight of the church's faithfulness to God's mission, it is
4 especially appropriate for a deacon or ruling elder to speak the charge.
5

6 **W-3.0503: Service in the World**

7 Christian worship and service does not end at the conclusion of the Service for the Lord's Day; we go
8 forth to love and serve the Lord in daily living. In so doing, we seek to fulfill our chief end: to glorify and
9 enjoy God forever.
10

11 12 **Chapter Four: Pastoral and Occasional Services**

13 14 15 **W-4.01: Pastoral and Occasional Services**

16 17 **W-4.0101: Flowing from Baptism**

18 As a sign and seal of God's gracious action and our grateful response, Baptism is the foundation for all
19 Christian commitment. The following pastoral and occasional services are all rooted in the baptismal
20 covenant and flow from the promises of Baptism. Such occasions may be appropriately celebrated
21 following the proclamation of the Word during the Service for the Lord's Day, or may be recognized in
22 other services of public worship. They are fittingly led from the church's baptismal font or pool.
23
24

25 **W-4.02: Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant**

26 27 **W-4.0201: Nurturing the Baptized**

28 In Baptism each Christian is set free from sin, marked as Christ's own, sealed by the Holy Spirit, made a
29 member of the church, welcomed to the Lord's Supper, and set apart for a life of service. It is the
30 responsibility of the whole congregation, particularly exercised through the session, to nurture those who
31 are baptized as they grow in faith and seek to respond to Christ's call to discipleship. When a person is
32 baptized as an infant or child, the session should equip and support the parent(s) or guardian(s) in this
33 endeavor. When a person is baptized as an adolescent or adult, the session should provide ongoing
34 opportunities for Christian formation and instruction.
35

36 **W-4.0202: Welcoming to the Table**

37 When children who have been baptized begin to express a desire to receive the Lord's Supper, the session
38 should provide an occasion to welcome them to the table in public worship. Their introduction to the
39 Lord's Supper should include ongoing instruction or formation in the meaning and mystery of the
40 sacraments.
41

42 **W-4.0203: Public Profession**

43 When those who have been baptized as children are ready to make a public profession of faith and accept
44 the responsibility of life in the church (sometimes called "confirmation"), the session should provide an
45 opportunity for them to do so. They are to be instructed in the faith, examined by the session, received as
46 active members, and presented to the congregation in public worship. At this time, they reaffirm the vows
47 of Baptism by renouncing evil and affirming their reliance on God's grace, professing their faith in Jesus
48 Christ as Lord and Savior, and declaring their intent to participate actively and responsibly in the worship,
49 life, governance, and mission of the church. On such occasions, it is fitting for all worshipers to reaffirm
50 the baptismal covenant. (G-1.04, G-3.02)
51

W-4.0204: New Members

The congregation receives new members by transfer of certificate or by reaffirmation of faith. After they are examined and received by the session, new members should be welcomed in worship. It is appropriate for them to reaffirm the commitments made in Baptism, profess their faith in Jesus Christ, and declare their intent to participate actively and responsibly in the worship, life, governance, and mission of the church. On such occasions, it is fitting for all worshipers to reaffirm the baptismal covenant.

W-4.0205: Renewal and Fresh Commitment

In the lives of believers and in congregational life there are special occasions of awakening, renewal, or commitment; these are appropriately celebrated through the reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant. People should be encouraged to share these decisive moments and stirrings of the Spirit with the session, so that they may be acknowledged and affirmed in public worship.

W-4.03: Commissioning for Service

W-4.0301: Acts of Christian Service

In Baptism each Christian is called to discipleship and sent in service to the world. God also calls people to particular acts of service in the church and world: within the congregation, as teachers, trustees, musicians, or committee members; on behalf of the congregation, through its ministry in the local community; in the larger church, through service on denominational and ecumenical councils; and beyond the church, cooperating with others who work for compassion, justice, and reconciliation. These kinds of vocation are appropriately confirmed in the Service for the Lord's Day, either as a response to the proclamation of the Word or as an act of sending. They may also be recognized in other services of worship.

W-4.04: Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning

W-4.0401: Called to Ministry

In Baptism each Christian is called to ministry in Christ's name. God calls some persons to serve in congregations in particular ways. In ordination the church sets apart with prayer and the laying on of hands those who have been called by God through the voice of the church to serve as deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders. In installation the church sets in place with prayer those who have been previously ordained as deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders, and are now called anew to service in that ministry. In commissioning the church recognizes other forms of ministry in the church: ruling elders called to pastoral service, certified Christian educators, and other certified persons.

W-4.0402: Setting for the Service

Ordination, installation, and commissioning may take place during the Service for the Lord's Day as a response to the proclamation of the Word. Ordination, installation, and commissioning may also take place in a special service that focuses on Jesus Christ, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the mission and ministry of the church, and which includes the proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Lord's Supper. The ordination and/or installation of a teaching elder should take place at a time that enables substantial participation from the presbytery.

W-4.0403: Order of Worship

A service of ordination, installation, or commissioning should focus on Christ and the joy and responsibility of serving him through the mission and ministry of the church. Following the sermon, a teaching elder briefly states the nature of the ministry to which persons are being ordained, installed, or commissioned. Those who are being ordained, installed, or commissioned gather at the baptismal font.

1 The moderator of the appropriate council (session for deacons, ruling elders, educators, and other certified
2 persons; presbytery for teaching elders and ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service) asks them the
3 constitutional questions, using the forms provided in this *Book of Order*. A ruling elder asks the
4 corresponding questions of the congregation. When all questions have been answered in the affirmative,
5 those to be ordained will kneel, if able, for the laying on of hands and the prayer of ordination. (The
6 presbytery commission lays on hands at the ordination of teaching elders; its moderator may invite other
7 teaching elders and ruling elders to participate. Members of the session lay on hands at the ordination of
8 ruling elders and deacons; the session may invite other ruling elders and teaching elders to participate.)
9 Those previously ordained will stand, if able, along with the congregation, for the prayer of installation.
10 After this, the moderator makes the declaration of ordination, installation, or commissioning. Members of
11 the session or presbytery welcome the newly ordained, installed, or commissioned person(s). In the case
12 of the installation of a teaching elder, persons may be invited to charge the teaching elder and
13 congregation to faithfulness in ministry and mutuality in relationship. When a teaching elder is ordained
14 or installed, it is appropriate for that person to preside at the Lord's Supper in the same service; she or he
15 will also give the blessing at the conclusion of the service. When ruling elders or deacons are ordained or
16 installed, it is appropriate for one or more of them to give the charge.

17 18 19 **W-4.05: Marking Transitions**

20 21 **W-4.0501: God's Constant Grace**

22 In Baptism each Christian is assured of God's constant grace and sustaining care through every transition,
23 season, trial, and celebration of life. Services on occasions of transitions in ministry bear witness to this
24 grace, and allow worshipers to express their thanksgiving, support, or concern.

25 26 **W-4.0502: Departing Members**

27 When members leave a congregation, we rejoice in gifts of their presence among us, acknowledge the
28 sense of loss that will come with their absence, and celebrate our ongoing relationship in Christ through
29 the baptism we share. The recognition of departing members appropriately takes place in the context of
30 the Service for the Lord's Day, either as a response to the proclamation of the Word or as an act of
31 sending. The service should include prayers of thanksgiving and intercession for those members who are
32 departing; that they may remain in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the
33 communion of the Holy Spirit.

34 35 **W-4.0503: Conclusion of Ministry**

36 It is appropriate to recognize the conclusion of a period of ministry, giving thanks for the gifts and service
37 of particular persons—whether through ordered ministry, as deacons, ruling elders, or teaching elders; in
38 specific acts of discipleship; or in other forms of service to the church or in the world. This recognition
39 may take place in the context of the Service for the Lord's Day, either as a response to the proclamation
40 of the Word or as an act of sending, or in other services of worship. The service should include prayers of
41 thanksgiving and intercession for those concluding their ministries. Other significant honors or
42 accomplishments may also be celebrated in worship, provided that this occurs in the spirit of giving glory
43 to God.

44 45 **W-4.0504: Censure and Restoration**

46 The church administers discipline as an expression of the authority of Christ, for the sake of the welfare
47 of the church, and toward the goal of redemption and reconciliation, by God's grace. Forms for censure
48 and restoration are provided in the Rules of Discipline of this *Book of Order*. (D-12.01, D-12.02) These
49 occasions should be observed in the spirit of deep prayer and pastoral concern, and in the context of
50 worship within the appropriate community or council of the church.

W-4.06: The Covenant of Marriage

The project to revise the Directory for Worship did not alter the section on marriage, as this language is under separate consideration through other actions of the 221st General Assembly (2014). A similar approach was taken with the section on ordination in the new Form of Government.

W-4.0601: Christian Marriage

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

W-4.0602: Preparing for Marriage

a. In preparation for the marriage service, the teaching elder shall provide for a discussion with the man and the woman concerning

- (1) the nature of their Christian commitment, assuring that at least one is a professing Christian,
- (2) the legal requirements of the state,
- (3) the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage,
- (4) the nature and form of the marriage service,
- (5) the vows and commitments they will be asked to make,
- (6) the relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship,
- (7) the resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

This discussion is equally important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after the death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce.

b. If the teaching elder is convinced after discussion with the couple that commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding are so lacking that the marriage is unwise, the teaching elder shall assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony. In making this decision the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the session.

W-4.0603: Setting for the Service

Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the teaching elder and the supervision of the session. The marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service which focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor. Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires the approval of the session, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table is extended to all baptized present. The marriage service may take place during the Service for the Lord's Day upon authorization by the session. It should be placed in the order as a response to the proclamation of the Word. It may then be followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

W-4.0604: Order of Worship

The service begins with scriptural sentences and a brief statement of purpose. The man and the woman shall declare their intention to enter into Christian marriage and shall exchange vows of love and faithfulness. The service includes appropriate passages of Scripture, which may be interpreted in various forms of proclamation. Prayers shall be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them in this new dimension of discipleship, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the triune God the teaching elder shall declare publicly that the woman and the man are now joined in marriage. A charge may be given. Other actions common to the community and its cultures may appropriately be observed when these actions do not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage. The service concludes with a benediction. Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and

expresses the faith of the church. The congregation may join in hymns and other musical forms of praise and prayer. Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshipers' consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian life.

W-4.0605: Recognizing Civil Marriage

A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the opening statement, the declaration of intention, the exchange of the vows by the husband and wife, and the public declaration by the teaching elder reflect the fact that the woman and man are already married to one another according to the laws of the state.

W-4.07: Death and Resurrection

W-4.0701: Witness to the Resurrection

In Baptism each Christian shares in Christ's dying and rising, and receives the promise of eternal and abundant life in him. In the face of death, Christians affirm with tears and joy the good news of the gospel and the hope of the resurrection. We do not grieve in isolation, but are sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit and the community of faith.

W-4.0702: Preparing for Death

The session should encourage members to discuss and make necessary arrangements for the time of death. Such arrangements should include plans for worship and decisions about burial, cremation, or medical donation. These plans should express simplicity and dignity, bear witness to resurrection hope, and convey the centrality of Christian community. The session is responsible for establishing general policies concerning services on the occasion of death.

W-4.0703: Setting for the Service

The service of witness to the resurrection is best held in the congregation's usual place of worship, demonstrating continuity with the community's faith, life, and hope. When there are important reasons not to hold the service in the usual place of worship, it may be held in another place, such as a home, funeral home, crematorium, or graveside. It may be observed on any day, and may, with the approval of the session, occur as a part of the Service for the Lord's Day. The service may take place before or after the committal of the body. The service is under the direction of the teaching elder of the congregation in which it is held. Others may be invited to share in leadership at the discretion of the teaching elder.

W-4.0704: Order of Worship

The service begins with sentences of Scripture, bearing witness to the resurrection and the living hope we have in Christ. Worshipers may sing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs that affirm our faith in the resurrection, everlasting life, and the communion of saints. The act of confession and pardon should be included as an opportunity for healing and reconciliation. Scripture is read and the Word is proclaimed, expressing our trust in the risen Lord; an affirmation of faith may follow. Prayer is offered: giving thanks to God for life in Christ, the promise of the gospel, the life and witness of the one who has died, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of the community of faith; making intercessions for those who grieve, those who minister to the bereaved, and all who suffer loss; and asking for faith and grace in this time of loss. The Lord's Supper may be celebrated, with the approval of the session. The service ends by commending the one who has died to the care of the eternal God, and sending the people forth with God's blessing.

In order that God will be the focus of the service, ordinarily the casket (if present) is closed. The casket may be covered with a pall, suggesting the image of being clothed with Christ in Baptism. If using a paschal candle is part of the practice of the congregation, it may be placed near the casket. Music should

1 direct attention to God and express the faith of the church. Flowers and other decorations should reflect
2 the integrity and simplicity of Christian life. The service may include other actions common to the
3 community of faith and its cultural context, provided that these actions do not distract from the Christian
4 understanding of death and resurrection. Fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately.
5

6 **W-4.0705: Committal**

7 The committal is to be conducted with simplicity, dignity, and brevity. The family and friends of the one
8 who has died, along with members of the congregation, gather at the graveside or crematorium. The
9 service includes readings from Scripture, prayers, words of committal, and a blessing. It should reflect the
10 reality of death, express our trust in God to receive the one who has died, and bear witness to our
11 resurrection hope.
12
13

14 **Chapter Five: Worship and Christian Life**

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16

17 **W-5.01: Worship and Personal Life**

18

19 **W-5.0101: Personal Life**

20 We respond to God's grace both in public worship and service and in personal acts of devotion and
21 discipleship. Personal life and public worship are deeply connected. Christian life springs from Christian
22 worship, where we find our identity as believers and discover our calling as disciples. Christian life flows
23 back into worship as we present to God the prayers of our hearts and the offering of our lives.

24 In personal life we seek to live out our faith through daily disciplines of prayer, other practices of
25 faith, household worship, and Christian vocation. Our lives as Christians are shaped by the Word and
26 empowered by the Spirit as we grow more and more each day into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.
27

28 **W-5.0102: Daily Prayer**

29 We respond to God's grace through the gift of prayer. The Christian life is one of constant prayer. Prayer
30 is a way of opening of ourselves to God, who desires communication and communion with us. Prayer
31 may take a variety of forms, including: conscious conversation with God; attentive and expectant silence;
32 meditation on Scripture; the use of service books, devotional aids, and visual arts; and singing, dancing,
33 labor, or physical exercise. Prayer may also be expressed in action, through public witness and protest,
34 deeds of compassion, and other forms of disciplined service.

35 The daily challenges of discipleship require daily disciplines of prayer. Daily prayer is meant to
36 be a gracious gift from God, not a task or obligation. It is an opportunity to draw inspiration and strength
37 from one's relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is a way of continually seeking the gifts and guidance
38 of the Holy Spirit for daily living. Daily prayer is a practice to cultivate throughout one's life, and one
39 that will bear much fruit.

40 Structured services of daily prayer may occur in councils of the church, in the congregation, in
41 small groups of believers, in households, or in private. They offer us a way of joining Christ's ceaseless
42 prayer with the church throughout the world. Such services typically include: the singing or praying of
43 psalms; the reading of Scripture; and prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, concluding with the Lord's
44 Prayer. Services of daily prayer may take place at appointed times throughout the day (such as morning,
45 midday, evening, and close of day) or may follow other patterns according to the demands of daily life
46 and the needs of the individual or community. In the congregational setting these services are to be
47 authorized by the session, but they may be led by any member of the church.
48

W-5.0103: Other Practices of Discipleship

We respond to God's grace through other practices of discipleship: keeping sabbath, studying Scripture, contemplation and action, fasting and feasting, stewardship and self-offering. All of these practices are meant to help us attend to the presence and action of God in our lives.

God calls us to keep one day in seven holy. Since the earliest days of the church, Christians have observed this commandment by gathering for public worship on the Lord's Day (or Sunday). As the first day of the week, this day shapes our lives of discipleship. Therefore the Lord's Day is a time for participation in public worship; engagement in ministries of service, witness, and compassion; and activities of rest and recreation. Those who must work on Sunday should find other ways to keep sabbath in the course of the week.

Through the Scriptures we hear the voice of God and find meaning, direction, comfort, and challenge for our lives. Regular, disciplined engagement with the Bible may include: simply reading the Word, praying with Scripture, studying commentaries, memorizing key passages, and putting the Word into action in our lives. One should seek to read a wide range of Scripture, always relying on the illumination of the Spirit.

The practices of fasting and feasting are ancient expressions of lament and celebration. The festivals and seasons of the Christian year provide rhythms of fasting and feasting centered on the life of Christ and the events of salvation history. Events in the life of the world, nation, community, or individuals may also call for acts of thanksgiving, sorrow, penitence, or protest.

The disciplines of stewardship and self-offering are a grateful response to God's love for the world and self-giving in Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are called to lives of simplicity, generosity, hospitality, compassion, and care for creation. Tithing is a primary practice of Christian stewardship and self-offering. We should be able to account for how we use our material goods, spiritual gifts, and time in the service of God.

W-5.0104: Household Worship

We respond to God's grace in the context of personal relationships. Christians who live together should worship together. Opportunities for household or family worship include: sabbath-keeping and rhythms of daily prayer; Bible reading, study, or memorization; prayers before meals; singing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs; and expressions of giving, sharing, and service to others. Given the complexities of contemporary life, it is especially important to cultivate these disciplines.

Household worship offers a valuable opportunity to remember and anticipate the Lord's Day, studying appointed Scriptures and reflecting on and preparing for the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The seasons of the Christian year, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, provide further shape and meaning for household worship. Worship in the household setting should include recognitions of birthdays, baptismal days, and other significant anniversaries, and may also reflect the cycles of nature, civic observances, and events in the local, national, and global spheres.

Children come to know, trust, and worship God by worshiping and praying with their parents or guardians. Children may lead and participate in household worship by singing and praying, listening to and telling Bible stories, learning catechisms, and serving and sharing with others. Parents and guardians should use these opportunities to teach children the shape and elements of the Service for the Lord's Day, so that they may be full and active participants in the church's worship.

W-5.0105: Christian Vocation

We respond to God's grace through our Christian vocation. In Baptism we offer our whole lives in service to God, and are empowered by the Holy Spirit with gifts for ministry in Jesus' name. Therefore we are called to honor and serve God in every aspect of our lives: in our work and play, in our thought and action, and in our private and public relationships. Such service and love is an act of gratitude for God's grace. This has been a particularly important theme of the Reformed tradition: the life and work of every Christian can and should give glory to God. As we honor and serve God in our daily life and labor, we

1 worship God. Whatever our situation, we have opportunities each day to bear witness to the power of God
2 at work within us. Therefore, for Christians, worship, work, and witness cannot be separated.

3 4 5 **W-5.02: Worship and the Church's Ministry within the Community of Faith**

6 7 **W-5.0201: The Church's Ministry within the Community of Faith**

8 God calls the church in the name of Jesus Christ to mutual love and service. The church's ministry and
9 worship are deeply connected. The church's ministry springs from its worship, where God builds up the
10 body of Christ through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The church's ministry flows back into worship as we
11 bring to God the celebrations and concerns of the community of faith.

12 Within the church, we seek to love and serve one another through the ministries of Christian
13 education and pastoral care, special gatherings for fellowship and prayer, and the activities of councils of
14 the church. The church's ministries are shaped and nourished by the Word and Sacraments, and are to be
15 carried out in the spirit of constant prayer.

16 17 **W-5.0202: Christian Education**

18 God calls the church to continue the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ, guiding and nurturing one another
19 through all the seasons and transitions of life. In particular, the church offers opportunities for education
20 and formation as members enter the community of faith, discover Christian vocation, and assume
21 responsibility in the world. The church's primary standard and resource for Christian nurture is the Word
22 of God in Scripture, bearing witness to Christ's way of truth and life.

23 The central occasion for Christian nurture is the Service for the Lord's Day, where the Word is
24 proclaimed and the Sacraments are celebrated. Beyond the process of Christian formation that takes place
25 in public worship, the words and actions of the service can be a particularly fruitful source of study and
26 reflection. Therefore all members should be encouraged to be present and participate in this assembly.

27 Educational activities should not be scheduled so as to prevent or discourage participation in this service.

28 The educational ministries of the church are rooted in the promises of Baptism, in which the
29 congregation pledges responsibility for Christian nurture. The session is responsible for the development
30 and supervision of the church's educational programs, the instruction of ruling elders and deacons, and
31 the discipleship of all members. The teaching elder contributes to the nurture of the community through
32 the ministries of Word and Sacrament, church school classes, the gift of prayer, and by example. Trained
33 Christian educators bring special skills and expertise in teaching to the church's ministries of nurture and
34 formation. The session should identify, encourage, and equip others who have gifts for Christian
35 education. The session should also support parents and guardians in the nurture of their children. (G-2.02,
36 G-2.03, G-2.05, G-3.02, G-2.11)

37 Church school gatherings offer opportunities for worship, including singing, praying, and hearing
38 the Word. These gatherings may also include occasions for self-offering and service. However, worship
39 in the church school is not a substitute for participation with the whole congregation in the Service for the
40 Lord's Day.

41 The church provides other opportunities for Christian nurture, including: seminary instruction and
42 continuing education; workshops on particular themes or topics; music programs and rehearsals; mission
43 and program interpretation; meetings of committees, boards, and councils; and retreats, camps, and
44 conferences.

45 46 **W-5.0203: Pastoral Care**

47 God calls the church to continue the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, caring for one another, sharing joys
48 and sorrows, providing support in times of stress and need, and offering admonition, forgiveness, and
49 reconciliation. Relying on Christ's grace and the Spirit's gifts, the church seeks to shepherd its members
50 through times of danger and death, illness and loss, crisis and celebration, struggle and sin. In particular,

1 these ministries flow from and are nourished by the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, signs
2 and seals of our relationship in the body of Christ.

3 The worship of God in Christian community is the foundation and context for the ministry of
4 pastoral care. Members draw on the resources of worship in their care for one another, sharing the grace
5 and challenge of the Word, the gift and calling of the Sacraments, the presence and power of God's Spirit
6 in prayer, and the fellowship and comfort of the community of faith. They take these resources with them,
7 extending Christ's grace and peace in homes, hospitals, hospices, neighborhoods, schools, and
8 workplaces.

9 All members are called to take part in the ministry of pastoral care, visiting the sick, supporting
10 the weak, and comforting those who mourn. Ruling elders, deacons, and teaching elders have particular
11 responsibility for the exercise of pastoral care within the community of faith. Those with special gifts and
12 appropriate training may be called to the ministries of pastoral counseling or chaplaincy. In certain
13 circumstances, persons may need to be referred to other qualified and credentialed professionals to
14 receive appropriate counseling and care. (G-2.02, G-2.03, G-2.05)

15 Services of wholeness and healing are one way of enacting the church's ministry of pastoral care.
16 The central element in these services is prayer, calling upon God's saving grace or giving thanks for
17 healing received. A service of wholeness should include the proclamation of the Word, focusing on the
18 promise of abundant life in Christ. Prayer may be enacted through the laying on of hands and anointing
19 with oil, provided that these actions are carefully introduced and interpreted: healing always comes as a
20 gift from God, not as a product of human prayer. The Lord's Supper is a fitting way to seal the promise of
21 wholeness proclaimed in the Word. Services of wholeness are to be authorized by the session and are
22 under the direction of the teaching elder, but should involve leadership from ruling elders, deacons, and
23 others with gifts for prayer. They may take on a regular basis, as an occasional event, or as a part of the
24 Service for the Lord's Day.

25 Services of acceptance and reconciliation acknowledge the reality of sin and suffering and seek
26 the redeeming grace of God. They provide an appropriate way to acknowledge our involvement and
27 responsibility in broken relationships and sinful social structures. The central element in these services is
28 confession and pardon, along with appropriate signs of peace and reconciliation. They should include
29 readings from Scripture that reveal the grace of God, and may involve elements of prayer, expressions of
30 thanksgiving, and enactments of commitment.

31 **W-5.0204: Other Gatherings**

32 God calls the church to gather as the body of Christ at other times and places to learn, pray, serve
33 together, and enjoy Christian fellowship. Bible studies, prayer circles, covenant groups, and other
34 meetings may take place throughout the week and various times of day, whether on the church grounds, at
35 members' homes, or elsewhere. These gatherings present valuable opportunities for: reading, studying,
36 and discussing the Scriptures; Christian formation and nurture; praying for one another, the church, and
37 the world; sharing personal stories, celebrations, and concerns; common work, meals, fellowship, and
38 recreation; and living out the gospel through acts of witness and service.

39 Christians also gather at retreats, camps, and conferences for learning, worship, service, and
40 recreation. Services of worship in these places are to be authorized by an appropriate council, and should
41 be guided by the principles of Scripture, the confessions, and this directory. Depending on the nature of
42 the event, orders of worship may be adapted from the services for daily prayer, the Service for the Lord's
43 Day, or other services described in this directory. Celebrations of the Lord's Supper are to be approved by
44 the council overseeing the event.

45 We bear witness to the unity of the body of Christ when we gather in ecumenical groups for the
46 worship of the triune God. Such services are rooted, despite denominational differences, in the Baptism
47 we share. Teaching elders invited to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper in such gatherings
48 may do so, provided that their participation does not contradict the Reformed understanding of the
49 Sacrament. (G-5.01)

1 We bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ when we pray in the presence of others,
2 particularly at interfaith gatherings. Such gatherings are opportunities to live and share our faith, even as
3 we listen to and learn from our neighbors. Those who participate in interfaith events should be careful that
4 their words and actions reflect the Christian faith, while respecting the autonomy, integrity, and diversity
5 of others' beliefs and practices. (G-5.01)

6 7 **W-5.0205: Councils of the Church**

8 God calls the church to seek the mind of Christ together in councils, through meetings of the session,
9 presbytery, synod, and general assembly. These councils should worship regularly, in keeping with the
10 teaching of Scripture, the witness of the confessions, and the principles of this directory. In councils
11 beyond the session, provision should be made for the regular proclamation of the Word and celebration of
12 the Lord's Supper. Every meeting of a council should open and close with earnest prayer. Councils should
13 also provide other opportunities for praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and supplication in the
14 course of their discernment and deliberation. (G-3.01)

15 16 17 **W-5.03: Worship and the Church's Mission in the World**

18 19 **W-5.0301: The Church's Mission in the World**

20 God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to join the mission of Jesus Christ in service to the
21 world. The church's mission and worship are deeply connected. The church's mission springs from its
22 worship, where we glimpse the reality and the promise of God's eternal realm. The church's mission
23 flows back into worship as we bring to God the joy and suffering of the world.

24 In its mission to the world, the church seeks to bear witness to God's reign through the
25 proclamation of the gospel, acts of compassion, work for justice and peace, and the care of creation. The
26 church's mission is shaped and nourished by the Word and Sacraments, and represents the living out of
27 our prayer for the world.

28 29 **W-5.0302: Evangelism**

30 God sends the church to proclaim the gospel in the world: announcing the good news of God's liberating
31 love; calling all people to repent and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; baptizing, teaching, and
32 making disciples in Jesus' name; and offering the promise of eternal and abundant life in Christ.

33 The Service for the Lord's Day is the primary context in which we regularly hear the
34 proclamation of the gospel and have the opportunity to respond in faith, committing and recommitting
35 their lives to Jesus Christ. Accordingly, an invitation to prepare for Baptism and live out baptismal
36 discipleship should be a regular part of Sunday worship. Christian worship also prepares believers to go
37 forth, in the power of the Spirit, to share with others the good news they have received, inviting them to
38 join in following Christ's way.

39 Special services for evangelism may be authorized by the session. The central element in these
40 services is the proclamation of the Word, with emphasis on the saving grace of God in Christ, Jesus'
41 claim upon our lives, and his invitation to discipleship. This act of proclamation should be surrounded by
42 prayer. Those who respond to Christ's invitation should receive nurture and support from the community
43 of faith, equipping them for Christian discipleship. If they have not been baptized, they should make a
44 public profession of faith and receive the Sacrament of Baptism in the Service for the Lord's Day. Those
45 who were previously baptized should be given the opportunity to express their renewed commitment to
46 Christ through the reaffirmation of Baptism.

47 48 **W-5.0303: Compassion**

49 God sends the church to show compassion in the world: feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, visiting
50 prisoners, freeing captives, sheltering the homeless, welcoming strangers, comforting those who mourn,
51 and being present with all who are in need. These acts of compassion, done corporately or individually,

are the work of the church as the body of Christ. The church is called to minister directly to people's immediate hurts and needs. The church is also called to confront and challenge systems that perpetuate human misery. We participate in Christ's compassionate ministry through local acts of witness and advocacy, through the programs of the larger church, and in cooperation with other agencies and organizations committed to human welfare.

In the Service for the Lord's Day, God's call to compassion is proclaimed in the Word and enacted through the Sacraments. We confess our complicity in oppressive structures, pray for those who are hurting, offer our resources to alleviate suffering, and commit our time and energy to care for those in need. Following the example of Jesus Christ, we pledge that we will respect the dignity of all, reach out to those judged undeserving, receive as well as give, and even risk our lives to show Christ's love.

W-5.0304: Justice and Peace

God sends the church to work for justice in the world: exercising power for the common good; dealing honestly in personal and public business; seeking dignity and freedom for all people; promoting justice and fairness in the law; overcoming disparities between rich and poor; bearing witness against political oppression; and redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples. God also sends the church to seek peace: in the church universal, within denominations, and at the congregational level; in the world, where nations and religious or ethnic groups make war against one another; and in local communities, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and homes. These acts of peacemaking and justice are established upon God's gracious act of reconciliation with us in Jesus Christ, and are a way of participating in Christ's priestly intercession or advocacy for the world.

In the Service for the Lord's Day we proclaim, receive, and enact reconciliation with God in Christ. Through the proclamation of the Word we are given the assurance of freedom and peace in Christ and are inspired to share these gifts with others. Through Baptism and the Lord's Supper we are united with Christ, made one in the Spirit, and empowered to break down the dividing walls of hostility that still separate us from one another. We confess our participation in unjust systems, pray for an end to violence and injustice, offer our gifts to support Christ's liberating work, and commit ourselves to pursue peace and justice in Jesus' name.

W-5.0305: Care of Creation

God sends the church to share in the stewardship of creation, preserving the goodness and glory of the earth God has made. God cares for us through the gifts of creation, providing all that we need in abundance. As caretakers of God's creation, we are called to: tend the land, water, and air with awe and wonder at God's gifts; use the earth's resources wisely, without plundering, polluting, or destroying; use technology in ways that preserve and enhance life; measure our production and consumption in order to provide for the needs of all; foster responsible practices of procreation and reproduction; and seek beauty, order, health, harmony, and peace for all God's creatures.

In the Service for the Lord's Day we express our care for creation by: giving thanks for God's creative power and sustaining care; acknowledging God's call to stewardship of the earth and confessing our failure to care for creation; rejoicing in the promise of redemption and renewal in Jesus Christ, proclaimed in the Word and Sacraments; offering our lives and resources in service to the creator of all; and committing ourselves to live as good stewards of creation until the day when God will make all things new. One way in which the church demonstrates integrity in caring for God's creation is through responsible choices about materials for worship, including the use of paper, sacramental elements, the construction of worship space, and other resources.

W-5.04: Worship and the Reign of God

W-5.0401: The Reign of God

The church in its worship and service is a living sign of the reign of God, which is both a present reality and a future promise. The church's activities do not bring about God's realm; they are our grateful response to the grace of God at work in the world. We seek to worship and serve God faithfully, with the confidence that God's reign has already been established and the hope that it will soon be revealed in fullness and glory. (F-1.01)

We do all of this in the name of Jesus, looking for the day when "every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10–11).

Amen!

Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and might
be to our God forever and ever!

Amen. (Rev. 7:12)