

Chapter Five: Worship and Christian Life

W-5.01: Worship and Personal Life

W-5.0101: Personal Life

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

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

W-5.0102: Prayer in Daily Life

We respond to God’s grace through the gift of prayer. The Christian life is one of constant prayer, as the challenge of everyday discipleship requires daily disciplines of faith. Prayer is a way of opening ourselves to God, who desires communication and communion with us. Prayer may take a variety of forms, such as: conscious conversation with God; attentive and expectant silence; meditation on Scripture; the use of service books, devotional aids, and visual arts; and singing, dancing, labor, or physical exercise. The Church’s pattern of daily prayer (W-5.0202) may be adopted as an individual practice of faith. Prayer may also be expressed in action, through public witness and protest, deeds of compassion, and other forms of disciplined service.

Prayer is meant to be a gracious gift from God, not a task or obligation. It is an opportunity to draw inspiration and strength from one’s relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is a way of continually seeking the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit for daily living. Prayer is a practice to cultivate throughout one’s life, and one that will bear much fruit.

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.

W-5.0101: Eph. 4:15; 2 Pet. 3:18.

W-5.0102: Ps. 119; 130; Matt. 6:5–14; Luke 11:1–13; Rom. 8:26–27; 12:12; 1 Cor. 12–14; 1 Thess. 5:17; West. Conf. 6.117.

W-5.0103: Gen. 2:1–3; Exod. 20:8–11; Deut. 5:12–15; 1 Cor. 4:1–2; 1 Pet. 4:10; Heb. 4:12; Heid. Cat. 4.103; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.223–5.226, 5.227–5.231; West. Conf. 6.117–6.119; S. Cat. 7.057–7.062; L. Cat. 7.225–7.231.

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W-5.0103–W-5.0104

Directory for Worship

God commands us to remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Sabbath is God's gift to us, a time for worship, rest, and renewal; keeping sabbath is a way of honoring the God who has created and redeemed us. Since the earliest days of the Church, Christians have observed God's 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 are encouraged to 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 and the help of the community of faith in deepening our understanding.

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 are accountable to God for how we use our material goods, spiritual gifts, and time in God's service.

W-5.0104: Household Worship

We respond to God's grace in the context of personal relationships, particularly when Christians who live together 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. Congregations are encouraged to nurture and equip households and families for these practices.

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 may include recognitions of birthdays, baptismal days, and other significant anniversaries, and may reflect the cycles of nature, civic observances, and events in the local, national, and global spheres.

W-5.0104: Deut. 6:4–9; Josh. 24:15; West. Conf. 6.117; L. Cat. 7.228.

Children come to know, trust, and worship God by worshiping and praying with their parents and others who care for them. 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. Household worship provides an excellent opportunity 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 at all times and in all places: in our work and play, in our thought and action, and in our private and public engagements. 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 worship God. Whatever our situation, we have opportunities each day to bear witness to the power of God at work within us. Therefore, for Christians, worship, work, and witness cannot be separated.

W-5.02: Worship and the Church's Ministry within the Community of Faith

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

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

Within the church, we seek to love and serve one another through the rhythm of daily prayer, the ministries of Christian education and pastoral care, the activities of councils of the church, and other gatherings of believers. The church's ministries are shaped and nourished by the Word and Sacraments, and are to be carried out in the spirit of constant prayer.

W-5.0202: Services of Daily Prayer

God calls the Church to pray without ceasing in Jesus' name. Services of daily prayer offer us a way of joining Christ's ceaseless intercession for the Church and world. Such services typically include: the singing or praying of psalms; the reading of Scripture; and prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, concluding with the Lord's Prayer. Services of daily prayer may take place at appointed times throughout the day (such as morning, midday, evening, and close of day) or may follow other patterns according to the demands of

W-5.0105: Eph. 4:1.

W-5.0201: John 13:12–17, 31–35; Rom. 12:9–21; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:11–16.

W-5.0202: Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17.

W-5.02

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daily life and the needs of the individual or community. Such services may occur in councils of the church, in the congregation, in small groups of believers, in households, or in private. In the congregational setting these services are to be authorized by the session, but they may be led by any member of the church.

W-5.0203 : Christian Education

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

The central occasion for Christian nurture is the Service for the Lord's Day, where the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are celebrated. Beyond the process of Christian formation that takes place in public worship, the words and actions of the service can be a particularly fruitful source of study and reflection. Therefore all members should be encouraged to be present and participate in this assembly. Educational activities should not be scheduled so as to prevent or discourage participation in this service.

The educational ministries of the church are rooted in the promises of Baptism, in which the congregation pledges responsibility for Christian nurture. The session is responsible for the development and supervision of the church's educational programs, the instruction of ruling elders and deacons, and the discipleship of all members. The **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† contributes to the nurture of the community through the ministries of Word and Sacrament, church school classes, the gift of prayer, and by example. Trained and certified Christian educators bring special skills and expertise in teaching to the church's ministries of nurture and formation. The session has a responsibility to identify, encourage, and equip others who have gifts for Christian education. The session also has a responsibility to support parents and others who seek to nurture the faith of children.

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

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

W-5.0203: Matt. 28:20; 2 Helv. Conf. 5:146, 5.233.

W-5.0204 : Pastoral Care

God calls the Church to continue the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, caring for one another, sharing joys and sorrows, providing support in times of stress and need, and offering admonition, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Relying on Christ's grace and the Spirit's gifts, the church seeks to shepherd its members through times of danger and death, illness and loss, crisis and celebration, struggle and sin. In particular, these ministries flow from and are nourished by the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, signs and seals of our relationship in the body of Christ.

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

All members are called to take part in the ministry of pastoral care, visiting the sick, supporting the weak, and comforting those who mourn. Ruling elders, deacons, and **ministers of the Word and Sacrament**† have particular responsibility for the exercise of pastoral care within the community of faith. Those with special gifts and appropriate training may be called to the ministries of pastoral counseling or chaplaincy. In certain circumstances, persons may need to be referred to other qualified and credentialed professionals to receive appropriate counseling and care.

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

Services of acceptance and reconciliation acknowledge the reality of sin and suffering and seek the redeeming grace of God. They provide an appropriate way to acknowledge our involvement and responsibility in broken relationships and sinful social structures. The central element in these services is confession and pardon, along with appropriate signs of peace and reconciliation. They include readings from Scripture that

W-5.0204: 2 Cor. 5:16–20; Jas. 5:13–16; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.234; West. Conf. 6.086, 6.147; Conf. 1967 9.07, 9.22.

reveal the grace of God, and may involve elements of prayer, expressions of thanksgiving, and enactments of commitment.

W-5.0205: Councils of the Church

God calls the Church to seek the mind of Christ. Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seek Christ's mind together in councils, through meetings of the session, presbytery, synod, and general assembly. These councils worship regularly, in keeping with the teaching of Scripture, the witness of the Confessions, and the principles of this directory. Councils above the session make provision for the regular proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Lord's Supper. Meetings of councils open and close with prayer. Councils also provide other opportunities for praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and supplication in the course of their discernment and deliberation.

W-5.0206: Other Gatherings

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

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

We bear witness to the unity of the body of Christ when we gather in ecumenical groups for the worship of the triune God. Such services are rooted, despite denominational differences, in the Baptism we share. **Ministers of the Word and Sacrament**† invited to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper in such gatherings may do so, provided that their participation is consistent with the Reformed understanding of the Sacrament.

We bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ when we pray in the presence of others, particularly at interfaith gatherings. Such gatherings are opportunities to live and share our faith, even as we listen to and learn from our neighbors. Participants in interfaith events are to reflect the Christian faith in their words and actions, while respecting the autonomy, integrity, and diversity of others' beliefs and practices.

W-5.0205: Phil. 2:5; West. Conf. 6.173–6.176.

W-5.0206: Matt. 18:20; Heb. 10:25.

W-5.03: Worship and the Church's Mission in the World*W-5.0301: The Church's Mission in the World*

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

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

W-5.0302: Evangelism

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

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

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

W-5.0303: Compassion

God sends the Church to show compassion in the world: feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, visiting prisoners, freeing captives, sheltering the homeless, welcoming strangers, comforting those who mourn, and being present with all who are in need. These

W-5.0301: John 20:19–23.

W-5.0302: West. Conf. 6.055–6.058, 6.187–6.190.

W-5.0303: Isa. 61:1–4; Matt. 25:31–46; Mark 1:32–34; Luke 4:18–21; 6:17–19; Gal. 6:9–10; Jas. 1:27, 2:14–17.

acts of compassion, done corporately or individually, are the work of the Church as the body of Christ. We are called to minister directly to people's immediate hurts and needs. We are 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 its power for the common good; dealing honestly in personal and public spheres; seeking dignity and freedom for all people; welcoming strangers in the land; promoting justice and fairness in the law; overcoming disparities between rich and poor; bearing witness against systems of violence and 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

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- W-5.0304: Exod. 22:21–27; Lev. 19:33–34; Ps. 82; Isa. 2:1–5; 32:1–8, 16–17; Amos 5:6–15, 21–24; Mic. 6:6–8; Matt. 23:23–24; Luke 4:16–21; 2 Cor. 5:16–21; Jas. 3:13–18; West. Conf. 6.127–130; S. Cat. 7.067–7.081; L. Cat. 7.244–7.258; Conf. 1967 9.43–47.
- W-5.0305: Gen. 1:26–31; 2:15–20; Ps. 8; 24:1–2; Isa. 11:6–9; Conf. 1967 9.53; B. Stat. 11.3.

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.

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)

W-5.0401: Matt. 6:33; Mark 1:15; Heb. 12:28–29; Rev. 11:15; Scots Conf. 3.25; Heid. Cat. 4.128–4.129; West. Conf. 6.180–6.182; S. Cat. 7.107; L. Cat. 7.306; Conf. 1967 9.54–56.