

Directory for Worship

“†”—In the Directory for Worship, the functions described as belonging to **ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elders)** may be, in particular circumstances, also performed by ruling elders.

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 a vision for Reformed worship, it suggests possibilities, invites development, and encourages ongoing reform. As the constitutional document ordering our worship, the Directory for Worship shall be authoritative for this church.

Direct references to Scripture, the *Book of Confessions*, and other sections of the *Book of Order* are provided in parentheses; other biblical, confessional, and ecumenical 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. God claims us as beloved children; we proclaim God’s saving love. God redeems us from sin and death; we rejoice in the gift of new life. 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 Adam and Eve, to Noah and his family, to Abraham and Sarah, to Moses and Aaron, and to the house of David, God made everlasting 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, fully God” (B. Stat. 11.2), 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, interceding for the redemption of the world, returning in glory to judge and reign forever. Scripture is God’s Word: the Old and New Testaments together testify to Jesus Christ. Proclamation is God’s Word: we bear witness in word and deed to the good news of Christ our Savior.

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- W-1.0101: Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4: 8, 11; 7:12; Nic. Creed 1.1; Ap. Creed 2.1; Scots Conf. 3.01; Heid. Cat. 4.122; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.023; West. Conf. 6.011–6.013, 6.112–6.113; S. Cat. 7.001, 7.045–7.048; L. Cat. 7.111, 7.213–7.216, 7.289; Conf. 1967 9.35–9.37; Bel. 10.1; B. Stat. 11.1.
- W-1.0102: Ps. 136:1; Jer. 33:1–9; Rom. 6:1–11; 8:12–17; 1 John 4:19; Heid. Cat. 4.002; Conf. 1967 9.17; B. Stat. 11.4.
- W-1.0103: Gen. 2–3; 9:1–17; 15–17; Exod. 19–31, 34; 2 Sam. 1:1–17; Jer. 1:4–10, 31:31–34; Heb. 8:8–12; Scots Conf. 3.02–3.06; West. Conf. 6.037–6.042; Conf. 1967 9.18–9.19; B. Stat. 11.3.
- W-1.0104: John 1; Rom. 10; 2 Cor. 4; Phil. 2; Col. 1; Heb. 1–2; Rev. 19; Nic. Creed 1.2; Ap. Creed 2.2; Scots Conf. 3.06–3.11; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.001–5.004, 5.062–5.079; West. Conf. 6.043–6.50; Barm. Dec. 8.10–8.15; Conf. 1967 9.07–9.11, 9.21–26, 9.32–33; B. Stat. 11.2.

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

W-1.0105: The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is “the giver and renewer of life” (B. Stat. 11.4), who instills our faith and enables us to follow Jesus Christ. The Scriptures describe how the Spirit moved at the dawn of creation, anointed Christ in baptism, raised Jesus from the dead, and was poured out on the Church at Pentecost. The same Spirit is still at work in the life of the Church and the life of the world.

The Holy Spirit manifests God’s gracious action and empowers our grateful response. The Spirit gathers us for worship, enlightens and equips us through the Word, claims and nourishes us through the Sacraments, and sends us out for service. To each member of Christ’s body, the Spirit gives gifts for ministry in the Church and mission in the world.

W-1.0106: Word and Sacrament

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

W-1.0107: Worship and the Church

God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament establish and equip the Church as the body of Christ in the world. The mission of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church flows from Baptism, is nourished at Lord’s Supper, and serves to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all. In the same way, the Church’s ministry emerges from the font, arises from the table, and takes its shape from the Word of the Lord. Therefore the worship of the triune God is the center of our common life and our primary way of witness to the faith, hope, and love we have in Jesus Christ.

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- W-1.0105: John 14:15–31; 1 Cor. 12:1–11; Nic. Creed 1.3; Ap. Creed 2.3; Scots Conf. 3.12–3.13; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.005; West. Conf. 6.051–6.054, 6.183–6.186; Conf. 1967 9.20, 9.31; B. Stat. 11.4.
- W-1.0106: Luke 24:13–35; Scots Conf. 3.18; Heid. Cat. 4.065; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.134–5.135; West. Conf. 6.078–6.080, 6.140–6.145; S. Cat. 7.088; L. Cat. 7.264; Barm. Dec. 8:16–8.18, 8.26; Conf. 1967 9.27, 9.30, 9.35–9.37; B. Stat. 11.4.
- W-1.0107: Isa. 55:1–13; Matt. 28:1–20; John 21:15–19; 1 Cor. 13:13; 2. Cor. 13:13; Eph. 4:1–16; Nic. Creed 1.3; Barm. Dec. 8.26; Conf. 1967 9.48–9.52.

To be a Christian is to worship Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. To be a member of Christ's body, the Church, is to share through Word and Sacrament in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

W-1.02: Time, Space, and Matter

W-1.0201: Creation and Redemption

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

W-1.0202: Time

Because God is the author of history, we may worship at any time. The psalms reflect the daily worship of the people of God, while the Torah teaches that one day in seven is to be set apart as holy to the Lord. The prophets anticipated God's judgment and triumph over evil on the day of the Lord. The Gospels all testify that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. The apostles came to speak of this as the Lord's Day, claiming God's victory over sin and death through the power of Jesus' resurrection.

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

Through two thousand years of Christian worship, the Church has developed ways of keeping time—many of them adapted from the feasts and fasts of Israel that Jesus kept. This pattern of the Christian year keeps us centered in Christ as we seek to proclaim the story of our faith, grow as Jesus' disciples, and serve Christ's mission. The year begins with a focus on Christ's incarnation, with the seasons of Advent and Christmas encompassing the Nativity and Epiphany of the Lord. After Epiphany we celebrate Jesus' Baptism and Transfiguration. At the heart of the Christian year is the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, with the seasons of Lent and Easter encompassing Ash Wednesday, the Great Three Days—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil—the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord, and the Day of Pentecost. After Pentecost we commemorate Trinity Sunday, All Saints Day, and the Reign of Christ.

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

W-1.0201: Rom. 12:1–2; Conf. 1967 9.16 .

W-1.0202: Gen. 1:1–5; 2:1–3; Ps. 1:2, 92:1–4; Isa. 58:1–14; Joel 2:1–16; Luke 24:13–35; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1, 10:9, 20:7; Rom. 14:5–6; Col. 2:16–17; Rev. 1:9–11; Heid. Cat. 4.103; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.223–5.226; West. Conf. 6.118–6.119; S. Cat. 7.057–7.062; L. Cat. 7.225–7.231.

We mark other occasions in worship, reflecting the cycles of civic and agricultural life, cultural 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, demonstrating that God cannot be confined to any one place.

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, 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.

Space that is set apart for worship should encourage community, be accessible to all, and open us to reverence for God. It is not to be an escape from the world, but a place for encountering the God of all creation who gathers us in and sends us out. 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 symbols of Word and Sacrament conveys their relationship to one another and their centrality in Christian worship.

W-1.0204 : Matter

Because God created the world and called it good, we use material gifts 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 objects 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.

W-1.0203: Gen. 28:18; Exod. 25–31; 1 Kgs. 6–8; Ezra 6:13–22; Ps. 24:1; Luke 2:22–52; 4:16–21; John 4:20–24; 6:1–14; Acts 2:43–47; 16:25–34; 1 Cor. 3:16–17; 1 Pet. 2:4–5; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.214–5.216; West. Conf. 6.117.

W-1.0204: Gen. 1:31; Exod. 25–31, 32; Ps. 50:7–15; Isa. 1:11–17; Amos 5:21–24; Mic. 6:6–8; Matt. 26:6–13; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 5:1–11; John 13:1–20; Rom 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 11:17–34; 12:12–13; Scots Conf. 3.21; Heid. Cat. 4.066–4.068, 4.096–4.098; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.020–5.022, 5.169–5.184; West. Conf. 6.149–6.153; S. Cat. 7.092–7.093; L. Cat. 7.272–7.274; Conf. 1967 9.50.

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 them 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. Through 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 gift 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 transcend our experience, understanding, and speech, such that we cannot reduce God to our ways of speaking. Yet we are compelled to speak of the glory, goodness, and grace 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, midwife, mother, 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

W-1.0301: John 1:1–18; Col. 1:15–20; Heb. 1:1–4; Conf. 1967 9.27.

W-1.0302: Exod. 3:13–15; 24:17; Deut. 32:11–12, 18; Ps. 22:9–10; 23:1; 27:1 Isa. 40:18–26; 42:14; 43:14–15; 49:15; 55:3–9; 66:13; Ezek. 34:11–31; Hos. 11:3–4, 10; Matt. 17:9; Mark 14:36; Luke 5:33–35; John 10:11–18; Rom. 11:33–36; Gal. 3:27–29; Jas. 2:1–9; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.217; West. Conf. 6.114; B. Stat. 11.1, 11.3.

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 identify him with the Holy One of Israel.

In worship the church shall strive to use language about God that is intentionally as diverse and varied as the Bible and our theological traditions. Language that appropriately describes and addresses God is expansive, drawing from the full breadth and depth of terms and images for the triune God in the witness of Scripture. Language that authentically describes and addresses the people of God is inclusive, respecting the diversity of persons, cultures, backgrounds, and experiences that flow from God’s creative work. Such language allows for all members of the community of faith to recognize themselves as equally included, addressed, and cherished by God.

Since Pentecost, the Church of Jesus Christ has been a community of many nations and cultures, united by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore our churches worship in many languages. The words we use in worship are to be in the common language or languages of those who are gathered, so that all are able to receive the good news and respond with true expressions of their faith. Through the rich variety of human speech we bear witness to God’s saving love for all.

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 treasury 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 worship—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

W-1.0303: Gen. 2:9; 9:8–17; Exod. 15:20–21; 2 Sam. 6:1–5; Ps. 23:5; 30:11–12; Ezek. 3:1–3; 34:11–31 36:24–28; 47:1–12; Joel 2:12–14; Mic. 6:8; Zeph. 3:14–20; Matt. 26:26–29; 28:18–20; Mark 6:56; 10:21; Luke 9:1–2, 12–17; 10:1–2; John 6:35; 8:12; 13:1–20; 1 Cor. 1:18; Gal. 6:14; Rev. 20:11–15; 22:1–5, 17; B. Stat. 11.2.

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. All of these convey the gracious action of God and communicate our grateful response.

W-1.0304: Culture

God has poured out the Holy Spirit on all flesh; Scripture promises that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The book of Acts and the New Testament epistles record the challenges and controversies of an emerging Church that would be “no longer Jew or Greek” (Gal. 3:28), 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 contextual—emerging from a particular community and incorporating the words, images, symbols, and actions that best convey the good news of Jesus Christ in that gathering of God’s people. It is also cross-cultural—reflecting the diversity of traditions and cultures within and beyond the community of faith. Christian worship is transcultural—proclaiming the universal message of God’s grace in Jesus Christ and rooted in common elements of human life that transcend all cultures. It is also countercultural—asserting the scandal of the gospel and anticipating God’s reign of righteousness, justice, and peace. Finally, faithful worship should be an intercultural event—fostering mutuality, dialogue, and equality among all people.

Whenever and wherever we gather in Jesus’ name, we join the praise and prayer of the people of God in every time and place. Therefore, it is fitting that we share stories and sing songs from cultures other than our own as we pray for and with the Church throughout the world.

W-1.0304: Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:17–21; 10:9–16; Rom. 10:13; 1 Cor. 9:19–23; 10:23–33; Rev. 7:9–12; Conf. Bel. 10.3; B. Stat. 11.4; *Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture* (Lutheran World Federation, 1996).

Chapter Two: The Ordering of Reformed Worship

W-2.01: Sources and Principles

W-2.0101: Sources of Order

Worship shall be faithful to the Holy Spirit who speaks in Scripture. The witness of Scripture provides the Church's preeminent, authoritative source for the ordering of worship. Those responsible for planning and leading worship are also to be guided by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), instructed by the wisdom of the Reformed tradition, attentive to the traditions of the universal Church, and sensitive to the culture and context of the worshipping community.

W-2.0102: Form and Freedom

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

W-2.02: The Worshipping Assembly

W-2.0201: A Royal Priesthood

In Jesus Christ, the Church is called to be a royal priesthood, giving glory to God in worship and devoting itself to God's service in the world. Worship is a collective activity of the people of God and an expression of our common life and ministry. It demands the full, conscious, and active participation of the whole body of Christ, with heart, mind, soul, and strength.

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

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

W-2.0101: Josh. 22:5; John 4:23–24; Rev. 2:7; 22:8–9; West. Conf. 6.006, 6.112.

W-2.0102: John 3:8; 1 Cor. 12–14; Gal. 5:1; Scots Conf. 3.20; West. Conf. 6.108–6.112; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.219.

W-2.0201: Exod. 19:5–6; Deut. 6:4–9; Matt. 19:13–15; Mark 12:28–31; 1 Pet. 2:9–10; *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Second Vatican Council, 1963).

W-2.0202 : Prayerful Participation

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

There are many kinds of prayer—adoration, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, intercession, dedication. There are many ways to pray—listening and waiting for God, remembering God’s gracious acts, crying out to God for help, or offering oneself to God. Prayer may be spoken, silent, sung, or enacted in physical ways.

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

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

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

W-2.03: Leadership in Worship and Ordered Ministries

W-2.0301 : Gifts for Service

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

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

W-2.0202: Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heid. Cat. 4:116–4.118; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.218–5.221; West. Conf. 6.114–6.115; S. Cat. 7.098–7.099; L. Cat. 7.288–7.296; Conf. 1967 9.50.

W-2.0301: Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–11; Eph. 4:7–16; 1 Pet. 4:10; Heid. Cat. 4.055; Conf. 1967 9.38–9.40.

W-2.0302 : Deacons

Deacons are called to lead the congregation in compassion, witness, and service, representing the ministry of the church in the world and the presence of the world in the church. While deacons have no particular responsibilities for the ordering of worship, the session should ensure that deacons (where present) have regular opportunities to lead in worship, and that their ministries of compassion, witness, and service are reflected in the public services of the church.

W-2.0303 : Ruling Elders

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

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

W-2.0304 : Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament † (also called **teaching elders**) are called to proclaim the Word, preside at the Sacraments, and equip the people for ministry in Jesus' name. Specifically, ministers of the Word and Sacrament† are responsible for: the selection of Scriptures to be read, the preparation of the sermon, the prayers to be offered, the selection of music to be sung, printed worship aids or media presentations for a given service, and the use of drama, dance, and other art forms in a particular service of worship.

W-2.0305 : Shared Responsibility and Accountability

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

W-2.0302: 1 Tim. 3:8–13; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.148.
 W-2.0303: 1 Tim. 5:17–22; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.147.
 W-2.0304: 1 Tim. 4:6–16; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.147, 5.163.
 W-2.0305: 1 Cor. 12:4–31; Eph. 4:11–16.

Where there is a music leader or choir director, the **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† will confer with that person on anthems and other musical offerings; the session will see that these conferences take place appropriately and on a regular basis. The **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† may confer with a committee in planning particular services of worship.

The session is responsible for educating the congregation about the church's worship, in order to facilitate their full and active participation. It is appropriate that the session provide for the regular study of this Directory for Worship, particularly in the training of ruling elders and deacons.

In fulfilling their responsibilities for worship, sessions are accountable to presbytery. It is appropriate that the presbyteries discuss with sessions the character of their congregation's worship, the standards governing it, and the fruit that it bears in the mission and ministry of the church. It is appropriate that the presbyteries provide instruction in worship, making use of this Directory for Worship in the preparation of candidates for ordination, and in the ongoing nurture of **ministers of the Word and Sacrament**†.

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, the Sunday service in particular is a celebration of Christ’s resurrection and an anticipation of the fullness of God’s coming reign.

W-3.0102: The Pattern of Lord’s Day Worship

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.

The pattern of Lord’s Day worship may be applied to days and times other than Sunday morning. Saturday evening services such as the Easter Vigil appropriately follow the order of Lord’s Day worship since, in the ancient Jewish and Christian reckoning of time, the new day begins at sunset. Services of daily prayer provide a pattern for worship at other times and on other days of the week.

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. This description of the Service for the Lord’s Day is presented as one commendable model, but is not intended to exclude other ways of ordering worship. Other patterns may 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-3.0101: Gen. 1:1–5; Rev. 1:9–11; S. Cat. 7.060.

W-3.0102: Luke 24:13–35; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.211; West. Conf. 6.116; Conf. 1967 9:35–37.

W-3.0103: Scots Conf. 3.20; West. Conf. 6.108–6.112.

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. A greeting in the name of Jesus Christ or the triune God establishes the context for worship as an encounter with the Holy One who calls all things into being.

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 has added 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: Prayer

A prayer may be offered, giving thanks and praise to God, expressing joy in the presence of Christ, and calling for the gifts of the Spirit to be poured out upon the gathered community. This prayer may employ themes and images that are drawn from the biblical readings for the day or from the setting in the Christian year.

W-3.0205: Confession and Forgiveness

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. Nevertheless we approach God with confidence, trusting in the mercy of Jesus Christ. This turn from communal praise to corporate confession, established on the promise of God’s grace, is one of the hallmarks of the Reformed tradition.

A call to confession expresses God’s initiative in calling for repentance and promising forgiveness in Christ. As members of Christ’s body, we confess the reality of sin, captivity, and brokenness in personal and common life and ask 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

W-3.0205: Scots Conf. 3.15; West. Conf. 6.031–6.036, 6.081–6.086, 6.097–6.100.

in Christ. Because of these associations with the ministry of Word and Sacrament, it is fitting for a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† to lead the call to confession and proclaim the good news of forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

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, reading, hearing, preaching, and affirming the Word are central to Christian worship and essential to the Service for the Lord’s Day.

A **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† is responsible for the selection of Scriptures to be read in public worship. Selected readings are to be drawn from both Old and New Testaments, and over a period of time should reflect the broad content and full message of Scripture. Selections for readings should be guided by the rhythms of the Christian year, events in the world, and pastoral concerns in the local congregation. Lectionaries ensure a broad range of biblical texts as well as consistency and connection with the universal Church. The **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† is also responsible for the version of the Bible to be used in public worship. The Scriptures are to be read in the common language(s) of the worshipping community. The congregation is to be informed of significant adaptations, paraphrases, or new translations.

The Word proclaimed shall 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 will 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.

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

W-3.0301: Gen. 1:1–5; Ps. 19:1–14; Isa. 40:1–31; 55:10–11; Luke 4:16–21; 24:13–35; John 1:1–18; Rom. 10:8–17; Jas. 1:22–27; Heb. 1:1–4; 4:12–13; Scots Conf. 3.19; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.001–5.007; West. Conf. 6.001–6.010, 6.055–6.058, 6.187–6.190; S. Cat. 7.002–7.003; L. Cat. 7.113–7.115; 7.265–7.270; Barm. Dec. 8.10–8.12; Conf. 1967 9.27–9.30, 9.49.

W-3.03

W-3.0301–W-3.0305

Directory for Worship

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 is to be clear, audible, and attentive to the meaning of the text. Reading from the church’s Bible 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 the proclamation of the Word, it is fitting for a deacon or ruling elder to read Scripture. The session will ensure that all readers are prepared for this important ministry.

The role of the congregation is to listen prayerfully, actively, and attentively to the Word that is read and proclaimed. Such listening requires expectation, concentration, and imagination. The congregation may participate in the presentation of Scripture through unison, responsive, or antiphonal readings, or by following along with printed or projected materials. Spoken responses may conclude the reading of Scripture. Scripture may also be presented through music.

W-3.0304: Musical Responses

Psalms, canticles, anthems, alleluias, songs of praise, or other musical responses may accompany the reading of the Word. A psalm may be sung in response to the first reading, giving the congregation an opportunity to reflect on and pray from that text.

W-3.0305: Proclamation

A sermon, based on the Scripture(s) read in worship, proclaims the good news of the risen Lord and presents the gift and calling of the gospel. Through the sermon, we encounter Jesus Christ in God’s Word, are equipped to follow him more faithfully, and are inspired to proclaim the gospel to others through our words and deeds. The sermon may conclude with prayer, an ascription of praise, or a call to discipleship. In keeping with the ministry of Word and Sacrament, a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† ordinarily preaches the sermon.

W-3.0302: 2 Helv. Conf. 5.005; S. Cat. 7.089; L. Cat. 7.114, 7.265.

W-3.0303: West. Conf. 6.116; S. Cat. 7.090; L. Cat. 7.267.

W-3.0305: L. Cat. 7.268.

Other forms of proclamation include song, drama, dance, visual art, and testimony. Like the sermon, these are to illuminate the Scripture(s) read in worship and communicate the good news of the gospel. When these forms of proclamation are employed, worship leaders should connect them with the witness of the Scripture(s) to the Triune God.

W-3.0306: Affirmation of Faith

Responding to the Word proclaimed, we affirm our faith in the holy, triune God. This affirmation of faith is drawn from sentences of Scripture or the creeds, confessions, and catechisms. A congregational song, anthem, or other musical response may serve as an affirmation of faith. Opportunities for personal testimony may also be provided at this time. When Baptism or the reaffirmation of Baptism takes place, the Apostles' Creed is spoken in the context of the baptismal liturgy. The Nicene Creed, our earliest ecumenical confession of faith, is traditionally associated with the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

W-3.0307: Baptism and Baptismal Discipleship

The Sacrament of Baptism (W-3.0402–W-3.0408) and other services associated with the baptismal covenant ordinarily take place as a response to the Word. Such services include the reaffirmation of Baptism on profession of faith (W-4.0203), the reception of new members (W-4.0204), commissioning for service (W-4.03), ordination and installation to ordered ministry (W-4.04), transitions in life or ministry (W-4.05), commemorations of communal events, Christian marriage (W-4.06), and witness to the resurrection (W-4.07). An invitation to discipleship may also be spoken at this time, calling worshipers to be baptized or to live into the promises of their Baptism.

W-3.0308: Prayers of Intercession

In response to the Word, we pray for the world God so loves—joining Christ's own ministry of intercession and the sighs of the Spirit, too deep for words. These prayers are not the work of a single leader, but an act of the whole congregation as Christ's royal priesthood. We affirm our participation in the prayer through our "amen" and other responses.

Prayers of intercession and supplication are offered for: the mission and ministry of the universal Church and the local congregation; care of creation and the right use of resources; peace and justice in the world; the leaders and peoples of all nations; the poor, hungry, and oppressed; compassion and reconciliation in the local community; healing and wholeness for all who suffer; and other special needs. These prayers may be led from the communion table or from the midst of the congregation. They may include musical responses or symbolic action. The peace of Christ may follow, if not previously shared.

W-3.0306: 1 Cor. 15:1–11; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–20; 1 Tim. 3:16.

W-3.0307: Matt. 28:16–20.

W-3.0308: John 3:16–17; Rom. 8:26–27; 1 Tim. 2:1–7; Heb. 4:14–16; 1 Pet. 2:4–10; Heid. Cat. 4:116–4.118; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.218–5.220; West. Conf. 6.114–6.115; S. Cat. 7.098–7.099; L. Cat. 7.288–7.297; Conf. 1967 9.50.

Because pastors are called to serve as good shepherds for God’s people, it is fitting for a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† to lead the prayers of intercession and supplication. Because deacons are responsible for ministries of compassion and ruling elders are charged with the nurture of the congregation, it is also fitting for a deacon or ruling elder to lead these prayers. Other persons with a gift for prayer may be invited to lead the intercessions.

W-3.0309: Offering and Lord’s Supper

The collection of tithes and offerings (W-3.0411) and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (W-3.0409–W-3.0414) take place as a response to the Word. These actions are signs of our gratitude for the grace of God proclaimed in the gospel. If the Lord’s Supper is omitted, a prayer of thanksgiving and dedication follows the collection of the offering (W-3.0415).

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. They are gracious acts of God, by which Christ Jesus offers his life to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are also human acts of gratitude, by which we offer our lives to God in love and service. The 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

W-3.0401: Scots Conf. 3.21–3.23; Heid. Cat. 4.066–4.068; West. Conf. 6.149–6.153; L. Cat. 7.286–7.287.

W-3.0402: Gen. 1:2; 17:1–14; Isa. 43:1–4; 44:1–4; 55:1–3; Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:25–27; Matt. 3:1–17; 28:16–20; Mark 1:1–11; 10:35–40; Luke 3:1–22; John 1:19–34; 3:1–5; 4:7–15; 7:37–38; Acts 1:4–5; 2:37–41; 22:16; Rom. 6:3–11; 1 Cor. 6:11; 10:1–4; 12:12–13; 2 Cor. 1:21–22; Gal. 3:27–29; Eph. 1:13–14; 2:11–22; 4:4–6; 5:14; Col. 2:11–12; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Pet. 3:18–22; Rev. 7:13–17; 21:6; 22:1–5, 17; Scots Conf. 3.21–3.23; Heid. Cat. 4.069–4.074; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.185–5.192; West. Conf. 6.154–6.160; S. Cat. 7.094–7.095; L. Cat. 7.275–7.277; Conf. 1967 9.51.

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 is linked with 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 God washes us clean and makes us 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 that flows from God's throne.

Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is at once God's gift of grace, God's means of grace, and God's call to respond to that grace. Through Baptism, Jesus Christ calls us to repentance, faithfulness, and discipleship. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit 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 young 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.

Baptism marks the beginning of new life in Christ. The new way of life to which God calls us is one of deep commitment, disciplined discernment, and growth in faith. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, given with and through Baptism, equip and strengthen us for the challenges of Christian faith and life.

Baptism is ordinarily celebrated on the Lord's Day in the gathering of the people of God. The presence of the covenant community bears witness to the one body of Christ, into whom we are baptized. When circumstances call for the administration of Baptism apart from public worship, the congregation should be represented by one or more members.

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 triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

W-3.0403: Responsibility for Baptism

Baptism shall be authorized by the session and administered by a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**†. The session's responsibilities for Baptism include: encouraging parents (or those exercising parental responsibility) 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, 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 for baptismal life in the world. 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.

When a young child is presented for Baptism at least one parent (or person exercising parental responsibility) should be an active member of a Christian church, normally the congregation in which the baptism takes place. The session may consider a request to baptize a child whose parent is an active member of another church. If the session approves such a request, it should communicate 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.

A council may authorize a Baptism, to be administered by a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**†, in certain situations beyond the congregational setting, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, military bases, or other ministry settings. In these cases, the **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† is responsible for ensuring that the name of the newly baptized person is placed on the appropriate roll of a council (G-3.02, G-3.03).

W-3.0404: Presentation

The **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† 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, 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 shall 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 church's worship and mission. Together with the congregation they profess their faith, using the Apostles' Creed, the baptismal affirmation of the early Church.

W-3.0406: Thanksgiving over the Water

At the place of baptism, a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† 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 **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† shall address each person by their Christian or given name and say: “[Name], 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 with the hand, by pouring, or through 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, if not previously shared.

The Church's way of welcome into the body of Christ involves the unrepeatable Sacrament of Baptism and the repeatable Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Christ bathes us with mercy, then feeds us with grace. Since this ancient pattern of initiation includes both Sacraments, the Lord's Supper appropriately follows Baptism; 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 the people of God. 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 shared bread and wine with his disciples. He spoke of the bread and wine as his body and blood, signs of the new covenant and told

W-3.0409: Ps. 107:1–3; Isa. 25:6–9; 43:5–7; 55:1–3; Matt. 5:23–24; 8:11; 14:13–21; 15:32–39; 22:1–14; 26:17–29; Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–10; 14:12–25; Luke 4:18–21; 5:27–32; 7:36–50; 9:10–17; 10:38–42; 14:15–24; 22:7–23; 24:13–43; John 2:1–13; 5:1; 6:1–13; 7:1–39; 10:22–42; 12:1–3; 13:1–35; 21:1–14; Acts 1:1–11; 2:42–47; Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 8:1–13; 10:14–33; 11:17–34; 15:20–28; Gal. 3:27–29; Eph. 1:22–23; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 3:1–4; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; Jas. 2:1–7, 14–17; 1 John 3:16–18; Rev. 19:9; Scots Conf. 3.21–3.23; Heid. Cat. 4.075–4.082; 2 Helv. Conf. 5.193–5.210; West. Conf. 6.161–6.168; S. Cat. 7.096–7.097; L. Cat. 7.278–7.285; Conf. 1967 9.52.

the disciples to remember him by keeping this feast. 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, when we share the bread and cup in Jesus' name, "we who are many are one body" (1 Cor. 10:17).

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 at once God's gift of grace, God's means of grace, and God's call to respond to that grace. Through the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ nourishes us in righteousness, faithfulness, and discipleship. Through the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit renews the Church in its identity and sends the Church to mission in the world.

When we gather at the Lord's Supper the Spirit draws us into Christ's presence and unites with the Church in every time and place. We join with all the faithful in heaven and on earth in offering thanksgiving to the triune God. We reaffirm the promises of 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.

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

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated as a regular part of the Service for the Lord's Day, preceded by the proclamation of the Word, in the gathering of the people of God. When local circumstances call for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated less frequently, the session may approve other schedules for celebration, in no case less than quarterly. If the Lord's Supper is celebrated less frequently than on each Lord's Day, public notice is to be given at least one week in advance so that all may prepare to receive the Sacrament.

W-3.0410: Responsibility for the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be authorized by the session and administered by a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**†. It is appropriate that a presbytery authorize and train ruling elders to administer the Lord's Supper in the event of the absence of pastors (G-3.0301b). The session may authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper at events other than the Service for the Lord's Day, including services of Christian marriage, ordination and installation, services of wholeness, ministry to the sick, and services of witness to the resurrection. At all such events, the Word is to be read and proclaimed. When the Lord's Supper takes place apart from public worship, the congregation shall be represented by one or more members.

A council may authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper in certain contexts beyond the congregational setting, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, military bases, or other ministry settings (G-3.02, G-3.03).

W-3.0411: Offering

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

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

W-3.0412: Great Thanksgiving

Following the offering and the preparation of the table, a **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† invites worshipers to the Lord's Supper using sentences of Scripture. At the table, facing the people, the **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† shall lead the people in a prayer to the triune God: giving thanks for God's creative power, providential care, and covenant faithfulness, along with particular blessings of the day; remembering God's acts of salvation through Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promised

W-3.0411: Gen. 1:28–31; 2:15–17; Lev. 23:22; Num. 18:21–29; Deut. 28:1–12; 1 Chr. 29:10–22; 2 Chr. 24:8–14; Mal. 3:8–10; Acts 2:43–47; 4:32–37; Rom. 12:1–8; 1 Cor. 12; 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:1–15; 9:6–15; Eph. 4:1–16; 1 Tim. 5:17–18; Jas. 2:1–8; 3 John 5–8; Scots Conf. 3.14; 2 Helv. Conf. 5:110–5.123, 5.211; West. Conf. 6.087–6.093, 6.146–6.148.

return, as well as Jesus' institution of the Sacrament (if not otherwise spoken at the invitation to the table or the breaking of the bread); and calling on the Holy Spirit to draw worshipers into the presence of the risen Lord, nourish them in the body and blood of Christ, unite them with Christ in the communion of saints and the Church in every place, and send them in mission to the world. The prayer ends with praise to the triune God. Musical acclamations, such as "Holy, holy, holy," "Christ has died," and "Amen," may be included. The Lord's Prayer follows.

W-3.0413: Breaking the Bread

At the table, in full view of the people, the **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† 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 shall make provision for the full participation of the congregation. The session will determine whether wine is used; a non-alcoholic option shall be provided and clearly identified.

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 **ministers of the Word and Sacrament**† 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 **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† 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.

As soon as possible after the service (ordinarily on the same day), 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 shall 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 are to 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. This may be accomplished by consuming what remains or returning the elements to the earth.

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

Having encountered the risen Lord in Word and Sacrament, 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 **minister of the Word and Sacrament**† ordinarily speaks the blessing.

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

W-3.0503: Service in the World

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