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CHURCH OF NASHVILLE

Officer Training Manual

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IN GRATITUDE

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~ TABLE OF CONTENTS ~

I. Church Mission, Vision & Values 3

II. Officer Responsibilities

Principles of Ordination 5
Rank of Spiritual Authorities 5
Calling and Character 6
Standards of a Faithful (Church) Member 6
Biblical Qualifications 7
Standards for Presbyterian Ordinands 8
Vows 9
Ruling Elder Responsibilities 11
Deacon Responsibilities 12

III. Church History

Origins and History of the Presbyterian Church 13
The Reformation, Presbyterianism and the "Via Media" 14
The Middle Way – Via Media 15
Ethos and Personality of the Presbyterian Church 18
A Brief History of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville 21

IV. Essential Presbyterianism

The Head of the Church 25
The Great Ends of the Church 25
Presbyterian Confessions 25
Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith 26
A Church That Defines and Affirms Its Faith 27
Presbyterian Discipline: Questions & Answers 29
The Presbyterian Belief System 31
Five Points of Classic Calvinism 32
The Presbyterian Church: Its Beliefs 32
The Reformed Faith ... What Is It? 33
Thinking Like a Presbyterian 34
Presbyterian Doctrine: Questions & Answers 35
The Sacraments 38

V. Church Government

How Presbyterians Govern Themselves 40
Three Basic Forms of Polity 41
Ecclesiology Compared 42
General Assembly 42
Synod of the Living Waters 43
Middle Tennessee Presbytery 43
Presbyterian Polity: Questions & Answers 44
Deacons: Questions & Answers 46
A First Look at the Session 47

VI. Spiritual Gifts

How to Identify Your Spiritual Giftabilities 49
One Hundred Questions that Reveal My Spiritual Giftabilities 50
My Spiritual Gift-ability Profile 53
Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible 54
Assortment of Possible Spiritual Gifts 56

VII. Officer Examination

How to Prepare for Officer Examination / What to Expect 57
Questions & Answers 57

Church Mission, Vision & Values

Our Mission

To know Christ, to make Him known, and to exhibit His love through worship, education, and service.

Our Values

1. Reformed Tradition – We are Presbyterians in the Reformed tradition, dedicated to the service of God, through Jesus Christ, for His glory. We take seriously our faith heritage. We are inspired by the great themes of the Reformation, which still resonate with us today: *"Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria"* – "grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone, and to God alone the glory." We have a rich history, both as Presbyterians and as a congregation. In all that we do, we seek to honor our past and preserve its legacy for future generations.

2. Always Reforming – We also take seriously our obligation to be open to change, renewal, and reformation – to be "the church reformed and always reforming" according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit. We seek to be a people who embrace the future as well as the past, who are eager to explore and grow and do new things, and who can maintain our strong foundations while constantly building on them.

3. Worship – Worship is at the heart of who we are as a church. It is an expression of our fundamental beliefs as Christians. Theologically, we are a diverse church that respects freedom of conscience, but we are firmly anchored in God's Word and in the historic Reformed faith. The essential tenets of that faith determine many of the elements of worship, and these are constant. Outside of these core elements, however, our particular form of worship is shaped by the church's history, culture and current needs. The church's primary worship style is traditional, with formal liturgy and classical music. We are committed to maintaining a strong program of traditional worship. We also seek to meet the needs of those in our church family who enjoy other styles of worship and to do this without compromising the essential and distinctive nature of how we worship as Presbyterians.

4. Ministry – The ministry of this church, like that of the early church, begins with caring for the needs of its members. This ministry of sympathy and compassion is not just the job of teaching elders and staff, or of ruling elders and deacons, but of every member. While pastoral care and church programs play an important role, it is even more important that we support and care for one another. Our goal is to be truly a community of faith, helping each other through times of crisis, supporting each other through times of need, and remembering each other in prayer.

5. Education – We share with other Presbyterians an informed and thoughtful approach to our faith. We view Christian education as a lifelong obligation, one that we undertake with enthusiasm. We do this primarily through Bible study in small groups and Sunday school, but we seek to weave Christian nurture into the entire fabric of church life. Our inquirers, confirmation, and officer training classes, for example, all provide in-depth instruction geared to people at different stages of their faith journey. This church has a special passion for the nurture of its children and youth. This finds expression, among other ways, in Oak Hill School, a K-6 program housed on the First Presbyterian Church campus. We educate and train our members not only for their own spiritual edification, but to better equip them to teach, evangelize and witness to others, to the end that when we better know Christ, we will be better able make Him known to others.

6. Service – Christ calls us to love and serve others, just as He has loved and served us. We seek to be a servant church, fulfilling Christ's commission to aid the hungry, the stranger, the needy, the sick and the prisoner, in our community and around the world. We endeavor to provide financial support to worthy missions, but even more we seek to engage every member, young and old, in regular service, whether helping with a church program, volunteering at one of our local missions, or going on an extended mission trip abroad.

7. Excellence – We believe that God demands, and deserves, our best. We do not honor God when we give Him anything less. We strive for excellence in all things, so that He is truly glorified. This includes the best utilization of our time, our talent and our financial resources.

8. Integrity – We seek to live our lives with Christ as our model – to walk the walk as well as talk the talk. We believe our lives should bear witness to our faith.

Our Vision

First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, will be known as a church that:

- Preserves its past while embracing the future, successfully integrating history and tradition with change and innovation;
- Worships together regularly in ways that engage every member of our church family and attracts others, of all generations, to join us;
- Calls its members to live together in community, caring for each other, and united in worship, ministry, and mission;
- Trains and equips all members of its congregation to know Christ and to make Christ known;
- Uses its resources to serve others, in this community and around the world;
- Lives out its faith every day, with excellence and integrity, so that our witness will attract others and allow us to grow our ministry and influence across all generations and throughout our community and the world.

Officer Responsibilities

Welcome to our New Church Officer Training Program! First Presbyterian Church (FPC) is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As such, we are governed by our constitution, which consists of *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*. Prior to your ordination or installation in the office to which you have been elected, you are to be familiar with the full constitution and be examined in it to the satisfaction of the Session.

Principles of Ordination

Please review the office of elder (Exodus 18:13-27), and the office of deacon (Acts 6:1-7). Furthermore, we ask that you study seriously the following biblical passages relating to church officers: 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Review in the *Book of Order*, "The Form of Government, Chapter Two: Ordered Ministry, Commissioning and Certification," learning what ordination is, discovering that ordination's style is not of power but for service, and learning that church office in the PC(USA) is perpetual, but there are constitutional ways to dissolve this relationship (G-2.01 through G-2.0407).

Your election to office is but the first step on a long, exciting and very worthwhile journey of service to our Lord and to His Church.

Rank of Spiritual Authorities

Primary Authority	Jesus Christ, the Living Word.
Secondary Authority	The Bible, the Written Word, as revealed through the Holy Spirit.
Tertiary Authority	The "essential tenets of the Reformed faith," as found in our Presbyterian *Book of Confessions*.
Fourth Level Authority	The combined testimony and experience of the church, especially as determined by actions and statements of governing bodies.
Lowest Level Authority	The private understanding and personal experience of the individual Christian.

We Presbyterians recognize that the primary authority in all our faith and life is Jesus Christ Himself, God's Living Word, as we discover Him in Scripture and by the informing of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our chief authority, to Whom our secondary authority, the Bible, God's Written Word, bears witness.

However, there are many times when we must look beyond Jesus Himself and the Holy Scriptures to discover what must be interpolated from divine revelation. When we seek this level of inquiry, we acknowledge we are heeding a tertiary level of authority and do the best we can to comprehend the mind of the church, as contained in the historic creeds of the church over time. We sometimes need to seek fourth level authority among sermons, position papers and other utterances, which seem to have group wisdom of contemporary fellow believers.

The least trustworthy and most dangerous authority is self-authority. We must be ever aware of the possibility of self-deceit, either by private opinion ("I am right; the rest of the world is wrong") or by personal experience, which of all platforms of truth is the shakiest and least sturdy, for experience can be misinterpreted

and embellished for personal gain and benefit. Wise Presbyterians do not trust their unique insights nor their special experiences. We test every private opinion and every personal experience by the Living Word, the Written Word, the creeds of the church, and the perspective of the contemporary Christian faith family.

Calling and Character

In Presbyterian thinking, there are three essential parts to a genuine "call" to the service of God as a church officer:

1) The inward testimony of a good conscience on the part of the person (acquiescence in allowing one's name to be considered),

2) The manifest approbation of God's people on the part of the church (the election), and

3) The concurring judgment of a lawful governing body of the church (ordination).

Both men and women shall be eligible to hold church offices. When women and men, by God's providence and gracious gifts, are called by the church to undertake particular forms of ministry, the church shall help them to interpret their call and to be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others. As persons discover the forms of ministry to which they are called, and as they are called to new forms, they and the church shall pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon the mission of the church.

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

b.) Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained or installed as deacons, ruling elders or teaching elders.

If you have a concern as to whether you meet all of the expected qualifications of life or witness, we encourage you to talk candidly with any of the members of the Officer Training & Enrichment Committee or with one of our teaching elders.

Generally, the spiritual qualifications for all three offices are similar and very high. Candidates for any and all of these offices should be sound in the faith, blameless in life, spiritual in character, an example of Christian conduct. The particular emphasis laid down for the teaching elder (minister of Word and Sacrament) is a competency in human learning as well as a broad and approved theological training.

Ruling elders should be full of wisdom and discretion and have an aptness to teach; "persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit" (G-2.0301).

Deacons should have a concern for those in need; "one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress" (G-2.0201).

Standards of a Faithful (Church) Member

A faithful member accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of His Church. Such involvement includes:

- proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
- taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
- lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern and active support,
- studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
- supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time and talents,
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,
- living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural and social relationships of life,
- working in the world for peace, justice, freedom and human fulfillment,
- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful (G-1.0304).

Biblical Qualifications

1 Timothy 3:1-13

TEXT	MEANING
"a noble task"	a wonderful opportunity
"above reproach"	not open to censure, unimpeachable integrity
"husband of but one wife" (wife of one husband, inferred)	not a philanderer (does not rule out divorces)
"temperate"	calm, collected in spirit, sober
"self-controlled"	fair, equitable, not insisting on own rights
"respectable"	of good community reputation
"hospitable"	generous to guests, open to strangers
"able to teach"	presents God's truth by word and deed
"not given to drunkenness"	not addicted to substance
"not violent but gentle"	not addicted to violence
"not quarrelsome"	not addicted to anger or censoriousness
"not a lover of money"	not addicted to wealth or power
"manage own family well, children obey with respect"	a good leader in own family – uses love, respect, not power
"not a recent convert"	has observable Christian record
"good reputation with outsiders"	has respect of non-Christians in community
"not pursuing dishonest gain"	not greedy, does not cut corners, is honest
"deep truths of faith with a clear conscience"	has a depth of conviction and a clean heart
"tested"	has faced temptation/testing has passed
"(spouse) worthy of respect"	family life shows Christian virtues/training
"great assurance of faith in Christ"	knows personal assurance of salvation

Titus 1:5-9

TEXT	MEANING
"blameless"	up-to-date on gaining forgiveness for sin
"children believe, not … wild"	children are Christian and not incorrigible
"not overbearing"	not arrogantly self-willed
"not quick-tempered"	not prone to anger
"one who loves what is good"	actively seeks to be helpful and respectful
"upright, holy and disciplined"	equitable, just, devout, pious, self-disciplined
"holds firmly to trustworthy message, encourages, refutes"	knows God's Word, encourages good, opposes evil, and knows the difference

I Peter 5:1-4

TEXT	MEANING
"not because you must, but willing"	not serving against will
"as God wants you to"	by divine appointment
"now lording it over"	not dominant, but serving
"being examples to the flock"	giving others a model of what Christ can do in one's life
"you will receive crown of glory"	accountable to God; rewarded by God

Standards for Presbyterian Ordinands

Presbyterian ordinands should recognize that in the Bible we have the revealed Word of God written. The Bible, our only infallible rule of faith and practice, is inspired by God in a way distinctive and superior to the inspiration of the classics or modern sermons. God spoke through holy leaders of old to record His will for humankind concerning what people are to believe about God and what duty God requires of us. Presbyterian ordinands have a duty to proclaim with conviction the inspiration of the Bible, the superiority of the Bible, and the absolute authority of the Bible over the lives of God's people. Human beings may yield allegiance to many different authorities, but Presbyterian ordinands have only one ultimate authority, the Bible.

Presbyterian ordinands should believe that "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." They should rejoice to remind their associates that God has revealed Himself as Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They should teach that God the Father is the Creator of all things, as well as the Sustainer and Provider of Life. They should acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God and is very God of very God, as well as very man of very man. They should believe that God the Holy Spirit is a Person, actively accomplishing the work of God today in this world in the hearts of God's people.

Presbyterian ordinands should never leave any doubt that they recognize Jesus Christ to be the God-man sent to save the world from sin. Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is the Word made flesh. He is absolutely divine. His purpose in being born in a state of humiliation was to give His life as a ransom for many. He came to die in the place of sinners.

The biblical doctrine of the substitutionary atonement must be believed by Presbyterian ordinands. They must recognize that Christianity is a religion of blood, the blood of Jesus Christ by which the sins of believers are washed away. The preaching of the cross as the only way of salvation is foolishness to the world, but it is the power of God to sincere ordinands. The sins of everyone deserve the full wrath and curse of God, but forgiveness of sins is found only in genuine commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and a spiritual regeneration or new birth. No one should ever have to question whether Presbyterian ordinands are born-again Christians, people who have personally had the blood of Christ applied to their own sins.

Presbyterian ordinands honor the whole Bible. They recognize the validity of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Since they worship the God of Creation, the only Omnipotent, they have no hesitation in accepting the miracle accounts of the Old and New Testaments at face value. The miracles performed by Jesus are not explained away; they are not stumbling blocks to faith, but road signs pointing to the power of the Savior.

Presbyterian ordinands must agree wholeheartedly with the doctrine of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, as He overcame the grave, death and sin, and all the powers of Satan. Because He arose, believers too are assured of their resurrection to be with Him forever. The doctrine of the resurrection is the keystone of Christian and Presbyterian theology.

Presbyterian ordinands take a vow to "receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of the church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do." Further, they promise to be "instructed and led by those confessions as (they) lead the people of God ... continually guided by these confessions." Thus, Presbyterian ordinands should never be found guilty of denying or abusing these documents. They must uphold them and the particular interpretation contained therein, to the degree that they properly reflect the plain teachings of Scripture. They should recognize that these

confessions, and all efforts of human beings, are ultimately to be judged by Scripture.

Presbyterian ordinands must understand that all are condemned by their own sins. The condemnation due to sins is eternal darkness or hell. However, the Gospel of Grace declares that sinners who repent of sin and truly turn from them to Jesus Christ in faith are forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousness. They are adopted as children of God and are rewarded with the free gift of grace – eternal life, which includes a new destiny for all eternity, Heaven. The reality of these concepts must not be questioned by Presbyterian ordinands.

The total depravity of humanity is recognized as true. The call of God to those who believe is sure, and God's elect can never be plucked from His hand. The assurance of salvation, then, is possible where the Spirit works. These facts are affirmed by true Presbyterian ordinands.

Presbyterian ordinands must acknowledge that the punishment for the sinner who does not believe in Jesus Christ is judgment at the last day before the judgment seat of Christ, at which time these ungodly receive their just rewards of eternal damnation. This judgment takes place at the second coming of Jesus Christ when He shall return bodily to reclaim His Own and to consummate the age of time and history, which He began. His return, indeed, is imminent.

Presbyterian ordinands must demonstrate a confident trust in the work of the Holy Spirit within the Christian Church. They must recognize the church as an instrument of God in this age, an imperfect instrument to be sure, but one blessed by God. The church is found wherever God's people meet to hear His Word properly preached, to celebrate His sacraments properly, and His discipline is graciously and redemptively applied. But the church always stands under the judgment of the ultimate authority, the Holy Scripture, and therefore is ever in need of reformation by the Word, as the Spirit interprets.

Presbyterian ordinands must teach and live an example of the Christian life of purity. The Saints – God's called-out people – should live as saints of God everywhere. Their lives should be distinctive and different. Their values and goals in life must be peculiarly above those of the world. Ultimately, the test of purity of life is the true test of one's beliefs. The orthodox Christian is the Christian with the clean life, one following in the steps of the Master.

Presbyterian ordinands, convinced of their own call from God and committed to God's Word, seek to move out into the world in mission both to "the lost" and to "the poor" in twin ministries of evangelism and justice, both as a part of their church life and as a part of their witness in the world of work/school/recreation. Stewardship of all of one's resources – time, talent, treasure – is an obvious result of one's call into these offices of service.

Vows

Presbyterian Christians are accepted into church membership when they take explicit vows of fidelity to Christ and His Church. By definition a "vow" is a "solemn promise made as unto the Lord." Thus, all members of First Presbyterian Church have solemnly entered into these specific vows of church membership:

1.) Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving God's displeasure, and without hope except in God's sovereign mercy?

2.) Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and depend upon Christ alone for your salvation as offered in the gospel?

3.) Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

4.) Do you promise to serve Christ in the church by supporting and participating in its service to God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?

5.) Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church and promise to further its

purity and peace?

Furthermore, every officer of First Presbyterian Church, whether they are teaching elders, ruling elders or deacons, must enter into the following vows of vocational fidelity to Christ and His Church in the presence of the congregation and as unto the Lord.

1.) Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge Him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through Him believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

2.) Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the church universal, and God's Word to you?

3.) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

4.) *(For teaching elder)* Will you be a teaching elder in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and continually guided by our confessions?

5.) *(For ruling elder/deacon)* Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

6.) Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?

7.) Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?

8.) Do you promise to further the peace, unity and purity of the church?

9.) Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination and love?

10.) *(For teaching elder)* Will you be a faithful teaching elder, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry, will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

11.) *(For ruling elder)* Will you be a faithful ruling elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

12.) *(For deacon)* Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need? In your ministry, will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

In electing and ordaining or installing every teaching elder, ruling elder and deacon the congregation takes further vows committing themselves to "accept…, encourage…, respect…, and follow…" their church officers, as they "guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church," as follows:

1.) *(For ruling elder/deacon)* Do we, the members of the Church, accept (*names*) as ruling elders and deacons, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ?

2.) *(For teaching elder)* Do we agree to encourage him/her, to respect his/her decisions, and to follow as he/she guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

3.) *(For ruling elder/deacon)* Do we agree to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

4.) *(For teaching elder)* Do we promise to pay him/her fairly and provide for his/her welfare as he/she works among us; to stand by him/her in trouble and share his/her joys? Will we listen to the word he/she preaches, welcome his/her pastoral care, and honor his/her authority as he/she seeks to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord?

No one of us should ever forget these vows we have taken before the Lord respecting our personal relationships to Christ, His Church and His Church officers (teaching elders/ruling elders/deacons). Fulfillment of these vows should reduce conflict in the body ecclesiastic without muzzling genuine difference among Christian brothers and sisters. We must remember that all these vows were taken before God in a church constitutionally a part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We must be aware that each set of vows explicitly committed us to a certain respect and support of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its "peace, unity and purity." If we differ, we must differ as in family and among persons who are nevertheless held together by a common love and a common set of commitments.

Note that in the PC(USA) *Book of Order* "Church" is capitalized when it refers to the denomination and/or to the Church universal. "Church" is not capitalized when it refers to a particular church; that is, First Presbyterian Church as a congregation.

Ruling Elder Responsibilities

1. Attend monthly stated Session meetings, typically on Tuesday evenings (no July or November meeting).
2. Agree to serve on, and actively participate in the work of, one or more Session committees with the intention to be prepared to chair a committee if called upon.
3. Participate in Officer Training as required by the *Book of Order*.
4. Be examined by the Session on completion of training.
5. Be ordained and installed.
6. Attend worship regularly.
7. Serve regular communion, at-home communion, and special event communion.
8. To serve as a commissioner at one Presbytery meeting per year.
9. Assist at baptisms.
10. Serve as Elder Host before Sunday services for two months each year.
11. Participate in the examination of new officers.
12. Be good stewards and support the church financially, including making a pledge during the annual stewardship campaign.
13. Attend the examination of people who are to become members.
14. Prayerfully and enthusiastically work with other officers to find and do God's will in our church and the world.
15. To appreciate and wholeheartedly support the decisions of the Session, even though you may not have voted with the majority decision.
16. To be a positive influence to the congregation on any discussions and/or decisions made within the Session meetings.
17. Commitment to continue to grow in my faith.
18. Other services which you may, from time to time, be called upon to perform.

Deacon Responsibilities

1. Attend Diaconate meetings, typically held on Monday evenings.
2. Agree to serve on, and actively participate in the work of, one or more Session committees. This includes attendance at committee meetings.
3. Participate in Officer Training as required by the Book of Order.
4. Be examined by the Session on completion of training.
5. Be ordained and installed.
6. Attend worship regularly.
7. Be good stewards and support the church financially, including making a pledge during the annual stewardship campaign.
8. Participate enthusiastically in the ministries and missions of the church according to my interests and spiritual gifts.
9. Pray regularly for the congregation and work of the church.
10. Usher at least 16 regular Sunday services, plus one or more special services.
11. Other services which you may, from time to time, be called upon to perform.
12. Prayerfully and enthusiastically work with other officers to find and do God's will in our church and the world.
13. To appreciate and wholeheartedly support the decisions of the Session, even though you may not agree with the majority decision.
14. To be a positive influence to the congregation on any discussions and/or decisions made within the Diaconate and Session meetings.
15. Commitment to continue to grow in my faith.

Church History

Origins and History of the Presbyterian Church

The history of the Presbyterian Church cannot be separated from the history of Western Christianity until the appearance of John Calvin in the early 1500s and the subsequent Protestant Reformation. Thus, Presbyterians share the history of Western Christianity and particularly that of the Roman Catholic Church until the early 1500s.

Certainly Scripture contains much we could claim as "Presbyterian": Abraham's faith in obeying a call from God to go into a land unknown, Joseph's confidence in the sovereignty and goodness of God, Jethro's wisdom in urging his son-in-law Moses to name elders to assist him in governance, Isaiah's understanding of the exceedingly sinful nature of sin and the holiness of God, Jesus' teaching regarding the Father's ability to pass Him the cup of the cross for the salvation of believing humankind, Paul's theological system of God's grace and election and sovereignty, and John's proclamation of God's ultimate victory over death. All these are keystone building blocks of the Presbyterian belief-system.

Following the Age of Jesus and the Apostles, the Early Church struggled in a hostile world, as believers were persecuted by a hostile Jewish parent and a jealous Roman empire. These early Christians, many living in the catacombs, often paid for this faith with their lives.

When Emperor Constantine in 312 A.D. became a Christian, the faith for both better and worse became legal and expanded like wildfire, though the new adherents were not always "profitable servants." The church soon became seduced with power, and for three hundred years in the time of the "Christian Empire," true believers faced great difficulties in keeping to the simple biblical faith when many sought to use the trappings of Christianity for their own glory.

When Gregory was elected Pope of Rome, the Christian Middle Ages began. Conflict was inevitable between the Christianized pagans/paganized Christians of Rome and the barbarians of both North Africa and Central and Eastern Europe. The Roman Empire eventually became the Holy Roman Empire as church and state in Rome merged. As masses were baptized, their paganism overwhelmed biblical faith. The Holy Roman Empire sent thousands of monks as missionaries to the pagan peoples of Europe, and gradually tribe after tribe accepted some kind of faith in this "Christ" and submitted to Roman authority. In these Middle Ages, "Christendom," with its mixtures of good and bad, Christ and Rome, church and state, paganism and faith, became a reality.

Conflict became inevitable again between the weakened West (Rome) and the challenging East (Constantinople). By 1054, the East and West split became final; the churches of the West were Roman Catholic; the churches of the East were Greek Orthodox. The papacy went on to see its secular power reach its zenith. Then, reformers sought to correct the corruption of papal power, some within the church as orders of reform and others on the outskirts of the church.

The Reformation came to Europe by way of a German Augustinian monk and priest named Martin Luther. He had found true peace with God and conversion to a living Jesus Christ, not by following all the rules and stipulations of the church, but by reading and believing what Paul had said in Romans about "justification by grace through faith." Luther discovered God's truth: "faith alone, grace alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone;" good works were to follow Christian faith. He rejected many of the evils of his contemporary church, including the selling of indulgences. (The church received payment in exchange for an alleged "forgiveness" or "indulgence" of a sin people wished to commit sometime in the future. Through this corruption of the concept of the grace and forgiveness of God, the medieval church gained enormous wealth while ignoring the biblical call to all sinners to a holy life and an avoidance of sin.) Luther's posting his ninety-five statements was the normal method for anyone to enter into public debate about a matter. He had no idea that he would thereby start the greatest religious conflict in European history and eventually be ousted from the very church he sought to help.

Soon many in Europe joined Luther in demanding that the church clean up its act. Among these was

John Calvin, a French Catholic, scholar and law student, who began to study the Scriptures and was converted to Christ and the Reformation. Author of one of the world's greatest systematic theologies while still in his early twenties, he was forced to flee Paris in 1534 for safety in Geneva. There he did most of his ministry and taught a generation of scholars in exile from around the world, including John Knox of Scotland. He reminded the world of biblical teaching on morals, ethics, government and personal responsibility; he developed a system of theology founded on the sovereignty of God and the priesthood of all believers; he provided the foundational concepts of republican, representative government for church and commonwealth. From Geneva, Calvinism permeated life and faith in Switzerland, France, the Rhineland of Germany, Holland, Hungary, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and parts of Eastern Europe and England, and wherever their colonists settled around the world, including America, where Calvinist Puritans arrived with the first English settlers in Jamestown in 1607!

Between 1705 and 1775 at least 500,000 Presbyterian Scotch-Irish came to America, primarily through Philadelphia and then settled in western Pennsylvania and Ohio and in the mountains and valleys of inland Virginia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and Kentucky, as well as Georgia and Alabama. By the time of the American Revolution, King George (blaming the rebellion on the Presbyterians) allegedly accused damsel America of being seduced by the Presbyterian parson!

In spite of controversy, the Presbyterian Church has faithfully sought to spread the Gospel to all parts of the world and has founded more missions in more countries than any other denomination in history. The Presbyterian Church continues to make major contributions to the worlds of education, law, science, business, government, health and peacemaking. The Presbyterian Church offers a healthy environment in which to rear children in the Christian faith, knowing that they will be encouraged to acknowledge a faith of their own that will carry them through the difficulties of life. The Presbyterian Church is open, caring, committed to Christ, faithful to the Scripture and seeks to offer the world a Savior for our sin.

The Reformation, Presbyterianism & the "Via Media"

I. The Reformation and Presbyterianism

A.) The Renaissance: Cultural Turmoil
Political Turmoil
Economic changes in Western Europe
Religious change developed into "The Reformation"

B.) The Three-Pronged Reformation (ca. 1500-1650)

1) First Reformation of Luther (modest)
   a. Form on Continent: Lutheranism
   b. Form in England: Anglicanism (similar in mood to Lutheranism, but not directly related to Luther in leadership or cause for development)
   c. Discarded only those things explicitly forbidden in Scripture
2) Second Reformation of Calvin, Zwingli (moderate)
   a. Developed more thoroughgoing Reformation called variously "Calvinism," "Reformed Movement," "Presbyterianism," "Puritanism"
   b. Discarded both those things explicitly and implicitly forbidden in Scripture
3) Third Reformation of Anabaptists (radical)
   a. Radical "Left" of Reformation: Mennonites, Baptists
   b. Rejected anything tainted with Roman Catholicism, especially "Infant Baptism" and "Covenantal Theology" and "Churchianity"
   c. Motto: "We speak where the Bible speaks; we are silent where the Bible is silent."
   d. In America in early 1800's inspired Campbellite Movement (Disciples, Christians, Church of Christ)

II. Via Media: "The Middle Way of Presbyterianism"

A. In polity: congregational, Presbyterian, hierarchical

B. In liturgy: informalism, blend, formalism
C. In evangelism: mass evangelism, both, confirmation
D. In theology: fundamentalism, balance, intellectualism
E. In freedom: permissiveness, balance, authoritarianism
F. Between individualism and churchianity: balanced covenant concept
G. Between emotionalism and rationalism: a faith of both head and heart
H. Blend of the best of the Continent and of the American Frontier

III. Presbyterianism: Its History And Meaning

A. Moses and Jethro in the wilderness (Exodus 18:13-27)
B. History of "elders"
C. "*Presbuteros*" is Greek for "elder"
D. Double standard: broad in respect to membership, exacting (narrow) in respect to officers
E. Origin of "deacon:" Acts 6:1-6
F. God's specifications for officership: 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4

The Middle Way – Via Media

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Western Europe arose from the deadness of the Dark Ages. The Renaissance brought enlightenment in the arts, education, cultural revolution and mass change. The rise of nationalism and the sense of nationhood marked the destruction of the Holy Roman Empire. Economic changes reintroduced the use of money, the rise of burghes and cities, the beginnings of the work ethic and the rise of a middle class, and the eventual demise of feudalism. Science was born; inquiry and learning again became respectable. With the printing press literature was mass-produced for the scholars who multiplied and wrote and read in their native tongues as well as in the historic languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. World trade expanded the West's knowledge of the earth. It is no wonder, then, that this sweeping expansion of knowledge soon troubled that ancient bastion of conservatism, the Roman Catholic Church!

Religious change swept Europe as Martin Luther, John Calvin and many others dared to challenge Rome on biblical grounds. The Reformation was born in 1517 and kept Europe ablaze with change and controversy for 150 years; the world has never been the same since. Though sometimes we think of the Reformation as one continuing movement, it is truer to acknowledge that there were three major reformations, each succeeding upon the heels of the other, each producing a special kind of changed church.

If one assumes that the Roman Church was the "Establishment" of 1517, then the First Reformation was a purification which basically sought to redeem Rome or least to limit the reform to a discarding only of those things (such as indulgences) explicitly forbidden in Scripture. This was the thrust of Luther's efforts on the continent; out of this reform came Lutheranism. If the Roman Church had given just a little, it is highly probable that Luther would have remained Roman Catholic, as that was his original intention. Instead, he was forced out of the Roman Church and only reluctantly founded a new church.

In England decades later, King Henry VIII sought only to break the political power of Rome, not to purify its ecclesiastical teachings. Thus, in England arose a second variant of Luther's modest reform. This has historically been known as Anglicanism, which often bears a striking resemblance to a modified Romanism.

After Luther came John Calvin, who centered his reform in Geneva, and who consciously sought a more-thoroughgoing reformation. Calvin, supported by Zwingli, sought initially to stand with Luther in Luther's reformation; but when he could not agree with Luther on the true scriptural teaching regarding the Eucharist, he went his own way and founded the "Reformed Movement." Calvin and his followers developed a more exacting reformation, discarding both that which is explicitly forbidden in Scripture and that which could be deduced as implicitly being forbidden by Scripture. Calvinism came to be known as "the Reformed Movement," "Presbyterianism," and in England, "Puritanism." Like the First Reformation, those in the Second Reformation sought to retain the biblical concepts of "catholic," as defining a "universal church" concept. If "modest" describes the First Reformation, then "moderation" defines the Second Reformation.

However, once the flames of change began to burn and the Scriptures were turned loose freely on the people, many alternative ideas surfaced. A Third Reformation took place, not led by one person nor contained in one area nor described under any one label other than "Anabaptist" (from the Greek prefix "*ana*" meaning "again"). This left wing of the Protestant Reformation turned loose all kinds of revolutionary forces and ideas. The "Anabaptists" rejected the concept of "universal church" or "catholic;" they rejected everything related to their former Roman attachments, including infant baptism and the covenant concept and "Churchianity." They supported only "believers' baptism" and were known as re-baptizers. These Anabaptists produced those known as Mennonites and Baptists, and later in America, the Campbellites (Christians, Disciples of Christ, and Church of Christ) followed.

Much more could be said of the Reformation(s). Suffice it to say that the Protestant Reformation produced three waves of reformation, distinctly different, with our Presbyterian heritage arising out of the second reformation or the "Via Media of Protestantism." This remains true today and explains much of who we are and why we behave as we do.

Although followers of the Second Reformation could by no means claim exclusive rights to the following seven base or fundamental statements of belief, it is true that these theological cornerstones, taken together, uniquely formed Presbyterian thought:

1) The Lord God is the Sovereign Ruler of all things, all kingdoms, all people.

2) The Bible is God's Word to humankind and His "infallible rule for faith and practice."

3) All believers have direct access to God through His Son and therefore have the responsibility to serve as priests one to another.

4) God calls (elects) those whom He will in the context of the Covenant Community of Faith.

5) The Invisible Church of God is worldwide (catholic) in scope; breaks in the visible church obscure but do not destroy this essential unity of His Church, which is found wherever the Word is rightly preached, the sacraments are rightly celebrated, and church discipline is rightly administered.

6) The Lord Himself is the Lord of human conscience; no other human has the absolute right to dictate to another's conscience.

7) There should be zeal for righteousness but moderation in all things.

The people of the via media or middle way in every age, including our own, may be described as people ultimately orthodox in conviction and experience, but slow to force their views on others. We sense that everyone has a responsibility for his own views to answer to the Lord. We trust God to rule and overrule, even in His Church. We may debate how to interpret Scripture, but ultimately we have a high view of Scripture and of the faith community, the church. We are broad, often adopting a latitudinarian posture toward others; this means that we often allow pluralism; sometimes too much for our own good. We are ecumenical to the core, even as we hold to our Reformed views. We are committed to a search for the unity of the church, even as we seek ever to reform (by Scripture) our own Reformed faith. We have never seen ourselves as the whole Body of Christ. We emphasize connectionalism as our way of declaring our opposition to independency. We struggle for one Reformed body per nation, which was Calvin's ideal. Even after we fight and split we are conscience-bound to attempt to reconcile and to reunite. We are never content with where we are; we always struggle to attain a greater understanding and obedience of God's truth.

Ever pulled, ever pressed between independency (power to the masses) and hierarchy (power to the system), we press forward with a commitment to the middle way of representative government. We are the people of the via media, sometimes pulling friends from both left and right, while at other times losing people to those same left/right viewpoints. We provide an easy meeting place for persons from those other Reformations, but we find ourselves on occasion facing enormous tension in the left-right pull. All of these characteristics and

tensions contributed to the long struggle for American Presbyterian reunion (1861-1983).

Let us look again at the Presbyterian Way, the Via Media.

a.) In polity (government), Presbyterians are between the hierarchical system on the right and the congregational system on the left. Hierarchy in either the oligarchy or monarchy forms is comparable to the secular government of "the few" or of a king; congregationalism is the ecclesiastical form of the Greek city-state or the New England town meeting. Presbyterianism is a republican form of government, akin to that of the United States of America, whose Constitution was greatly influenced by Presbyterians.

b.) In liturgy (worship), we of the via media are not limited to high church formalism or low church emotionalism. We have room for heavy formalism with its read prayers; we equally are at home with informal worship with extemporaneous prayers and sermons from the heart, though well prepared. We may or may not wear the academic gown, symbol of the teaching elder, or the clerical collar with tabs. There are few restrictions on laity's participation in worship leadership. We are a both/and blend in worship.

c.) In evangelism and church growth, we include room for mass evangelism and individual conversion. We normally "grow" our own Christians through the covenant family and the confirmation class, as young people take for themselves the vows first taken for them by their parents at their infant baptism. Yet, we also use the invitation for public profession of faith and receive many by adult profession of faith and baptism. We hold both revivals and preaching missions. We support church extension, new church development or planting, home and international missionaries, and rescue missions.

d.) In theology, the Presbyterian Church has always produced greater-than-normal shares of great teachers and theologians. On the whole, we continue to be orthodox, by any standard. We are home to large numbers of fundamentalists who hold to a simple way of following the Lord of the Scripture. We also welcome those who would stretch our minds, inspire us with new insights into ancient truth, and provide intellectual stimulation of God's ever-growing world. Presbyterianism at its best is balanced in this area; imbalance often produces for us problems, which lead to splits and troubles within the family.

e.) In freedom, we seek to shelter pluralism with boundaries, broad boundaries. Just where to place those boundaries often causes strife. We permit people to hold diverse views within a Presbyterian framework. We even have a dual standard, requiring one level of assent to a general Presbyterian viewpoint for our ordinands (officers) and another level, quite broad, for our ordinary church members. Members must declare themselves on five – and only five – constitutional questions (acknowledgment of one's personal sin; acceptance of God's Son, Jesus Christ, as one's personal Savior and Lord; agreement to attempt to live the Christian life; promise to support the church family in its worship and work to the best of one's ability; and agreement to submit to the government and discipline of the Presbyterian system). All ordinands (deacons, ruling elders and teaching elders) must fit themselves generally within the Presbyterian theology and polity and pass examinations by governing bodies of their peers. Hence, there is within the Presbyterian system both modified authoritarianism and modified freedom. Again, we see the middle way.

f.) The people of the via media seek a balance between individualism on the one hand and corporatism on the other. We recognize every person as having two names: his/her given name describes his uniqueness as an individual, created by the Heavenly Father with no other copies and one who in a unique, unmatched way must be called to the Lord. On the other hand, each has a surname, symbolic of his/her belonging to a family, a family with whom God enters into covenant. Thus, Presbyterians believe in the covenant concept and emphasize the nurturing opportunity for God's Spirit to act and call.

g.) We people of the middle way seek to balance the human needs of emotionalism and rationalism. We Presbyterians seek to commit to God both our hearts and our heads.

h.) History has blended into American Presbyterianism the best of the continental experience of the Calvinists and the best of the American frontier, particularly through the side-history of the Cumberland Presbyterians, separate as a major body from 1806 to 1906. Among Protestants the world over we are the second largest body, with the Lutherans number one. George Gallup reports that of all religious groups in America today we Presbyterians are the most evenly spread throughout all fifty states.

There are many obvious strengths to the heirs of the Second Reformation, not the least of which is the compatibility often furnished refugees from the First Reformation (high church people) or from the Third Reformation (low church people).

Sam, a reserved Englishman, attended Mom's Southern Baptist services, only to find that not one, but every man, in the congregation had to greet him loudly, shake his hand and pat him on the back, a most difficult experience for such a shy fellow. Then, when the services started there were much in-church visiting and talking, endless announcements, many crying babies, loud music directors, unknown emotional music, unscripted prayers, and a spellbinder of an extemporaneous and lengthy sermon with a never-ending demand at the invitation for souls to be saved that moment, all of which conspired to make Sam a bit uncomfortable. Then, he learned that his Anglican experience with Christ was just not acceptable to the Baptist Church, that he would have to repent of his sins (again), as though he had never been a Christian, become "a Baptist Christian," and be rebaptized by immersion. That was too much for him and quietly but firmly he told Lucile that he could not become a Baptist, no matter how much he loved her!

Lucile, an ardent and spirited Baptist of red hair and small stature, then determined that she and her groom would indeed worship together and form a Christian home even if she had to become an Episcopalian. Together they marched hand-in-hand the next Sunday to the Episcopal Church, where only a couple of gentle ladies nodded a reluctant greeting and touched them with hands of gloved weakness. Unseen by most they slipped into a back pew where in near silence the service began with much kneeling and stately "collects" composed several centuries ago in King James English, heavy organ-overpowered hymns, an unenthusiastically delivered intellectual lecture which failed to call anyone that day to any action for Jesus. His church was as quiet as hers was noisy. When she was finally able to obtain answers to her questions of inquiry, she discovered that she could be accepted as an Episcopalian once she had completed a course of study and the bishop had visited to place his hand of approval on her. This did not set well with an action-now Southern Baptist.

With each now disappointed in the other's church, this couple, as they continued their courtship, found the Presbyterian Church, which had enough noise, enthusiasm and freedom for her, and enough quiet and form and intellectual stimulation for him. Two weeks after their marriage, they together became Presbyterians, these refugees from the First and Third Reformations having found the Second Reformation via media.

They found that, whereas neither could accept the radical change to the other's Christian denomination, both could serve God in the somewhat compatible environment of the Presbyterian Church. Some of you have experienced this same phenomenon.

Another advantage is Presbyterians often are the bridge people between high church and low church, especially in ecumenical organizations.

Ethos & Personality of the Presbyterian Church

"But Joseph said to them (his brothers), 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'" (Genesis 50:20)

"'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.'" (Isaiah 1:18)

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.'" (Acts 2:38-39)

In these three Scriptures we find clues to the emphases of Presbyterians and clues to our corporate character and personality, our ethos if you will.

In the Genesis reference, we Presbyterians take great consolation that there is a Sovereign Lord of the Universe who has a plan and purpose for everything and makes sense out of all the chaos which surrounds us in our human existence. How good it is know that the One in whom we trust can take the worst that happens to us and bring good out of it, as Joseph discovered and as we observed with the cruel death of the innocent Jesus on the cross! Indeed, if there is any one statement of truth which holds Presbyterians together and has become characteristic of us, it is the certainty of "the sovereignty of God" in and over human affairs.

In the Isaiah passage, we find two balancing concepts which have become characteristics of those in the Presbyterian "middle way" family. There is first the assurance that the God who created humanity seeks "to reason" with us, to enable us to exercise our minds and to come to conclusions based on facts, and treats us (as creatures) as persons with whom He enjoys dialogue and conversation and relationship! Hence, those who check find Presbyterians particularly interested in the health of the human mind (along with education) and the exercise of reason (along with emotion) as each one discovers God and God's way for us in our life of faith and practice. Second, there is clearly here emphasized God's concern both for the heinousness and pervasiveness of human sin along with God's delight in covering sin, burying sin, changing its nature and power over His beloved creatures who regularly fall and fail. Thus, there is here a balanced reference both to the reality of human sin and the power of God's redeeming grace.

In the Acts quotation from Peter's sermon at Pentecost, we not only hear the clarion call for repentance (a Presbyterian emphasis) but also an assurance of the acceptance of sinners by Jesus Christ, of the promise of forgiveness, and of the certain gift of the Holy Spirit. We also hear Peter's plea that believers and their children be baptized and enjoy the promise of God. This promise of God (the covenant of the Old Testament now expanded by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ) is not only for believers but for their children, not only for Jews but also for Gentiles ("those that are far off"). Although there are gratefully some of Jewish extraction who attend our classes, most of us are Gentiles from the peoples who "are far off."

Ethos is defined as "the distinguishing character or tone of a ... religious group." Presbyterians, like all families of faith or denominations, have special characteristics, which cluster among family members. I would propose that much of what are discovered to be characteristics which compose our unique ethos or personality arise out of two parallel sources: our place in history as heirs of the Second Reformation or the via media and our special Reformed theology. Just as the birth order of children within a family seems to have major influence on the developing characteristics of children when they become adults, so does our place in the development of the Protestant Reformation. We are the "middle child" of the Reformation.

One will generally find Presbyterians open to ideas from both left and right, high and low church, more formal and less formal, continental and American frontier, power flow from the top and power flow from the bottom, and able to relate positively both with fundamentalists and rationalists, and with colleagues from the Orthodox, Roman, Anglican, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Independent and Bible Church traditions.

The following series of words or phrases captures much of the "tone" of this people of the middle way: Reformed, Calvinistic, Presbyterian, Connectionalism and Via Media. We hold a *"Reformed Theology,"* which is especially defined by its essential tenets with which we will deal in the next chapter (though most of these theological ideas have already come to our attention in the wording of the five church vows we have previously reviewed).

"Calvinistic" refers to our specific heritage arising out of the teachings and practice of John Calvin: of the authority of Scripture, God's sovereignty over all of life, human sin, God's grace, God's initiative, the power of the Cross, God's steadfastness, the priesthood of all believers, orderliness over chaos, involvement of the people in the governance of the Church, the need to educate the mind, and to do all human vocation as unto God.

"Presbyterian" refers especially to "the rule of church life by lay ruling elders and teaching elders" (both of whom bear the Greek label for "elder," which is "presbyter"), elected by the people and functioning in an orderly and graded series of governing bodies for the common good.

"Connectionalism" is the Presbyterian way of saying that, although we reject for our own use any hierarchical system (which places power at the top where such power simply flows down eventually to the people in a "trickle-down" design) or any congregational system (which may place all persons voting on all matters at all times, irrespective of their spiritual maturity and responsibility, and which may degenerate into a "rule by mob"), we firmly believe Christians are more effective and more biblical when we connect with each other and do not seek to live in isolation from each other. We reject the idea of an isolated Christian, for it seems to deny the valued "koinonia" or "fellowship of the saints," so highly lifted up in Scripture.

Via Media Presbyterianism may be well and accurately defined by this series of seven couplets:

- a biblical/evangelical people…
- a reasonable/moderate people…
- an ecumenical/inclusive people…
- a compassionate/caring people…
- a negotiating/process people…
- a study/thinking people…
- an orthodox/confessional people….

Presbyterians of all perspectives claim the Bible as their authority. Presbyterians of all viewpoints declare "good news" for humankind; that is one meaning of "evangelical." So, in a sense all Presbyterians can reasonably claim to be both biblical and evangelical. However, it must also be pointed out that most Presbyterians studied by the *Presbyterian Panel*, which is a *Presbyterian Gallup Poll*, are indeed "biblical" and "evangelical" in the more traditional sense of holding a "high view of Scripture as the trustworthy Word of God" and adhering to the essential uniqueness of God's only way of salvation through "God's grace for sinful humanity in the atonement of Jesus Christ on the Cross."

By our history and by our theology Presbyterians have been led to place major emphasis on the value of human learning and competency in education for all. Presbyterians require graduate degrees for their teaching elders and competence in human learning as well as in their theological studies. Presbyterians have always sought to found academies, colleges and seminaries that all may know who God is and what God has provided humankind in the way of knowledge of our environment. The health and the use of the mind are critical to Presbyterians.

Being the "middle child" of the Reformation, Presbyterians early on found that our views were in-between views, considered by many as too moderate. We would not be pressed into mediocrity nor into either a partial and lackadaisical reformation or into a radical "gangbusters" "all-or-nothing" extremism. From our birth as a movement until today, it still is our nature to seek compromise, the middle road, the "let's all work together" approach. We therefore major in peacemaking, at least most of the time. Hence, a significant part of our self-image is that we are indeed reasonable and moderate people.

As a people who intentionally claim to be only a part of God's Church, it is incumbent upon us to reach out to others who are a legitimate part of God's Church. That includes all who truly believe in God's revelation of Himself as "Trinity" and who trust in God's Incarnate Son as Savior from our sins and Lord of our lives. With these views foundational, it is an easy matter to reach out to others who claim the name of Christ in fellowship and acceptance. Thus, Presbyterians accept the baptism of all other Christians when such baptism is done in the Trinitarian Name of God and with water. Presbyterians accept the prior Christian experience and membership from most churches who claim Christ. (There are questions about some few who appear to be more cultic than scriptural.) Presbyterians have been in the forefront of almost all ecumenical movements. Presbyterians open our membership to all kinds of repentant sinners. Presbyterians generally have an open-arms policy towards other Christians around the world. We are ecumenical; we are inclusive.

Presbyterians, as Calvinists, are activists in almost all arenas of human need. We can be found in almost any trouble spot of the world, in almost any natural disaster or outbreak of disease. We care for the hurting and the dying in almost every environment. When we err, we tend to err in offering too much help or help in the wrong way, but we seldom err by having an uncaring spirit. Every General Assembly speaks as though it has authority in resolutions to solve most of the world's ills or conflicts that year; we sometimes know what we are doing. We always have the heart and the zeal; we do not always have the facts or the best solutions. But no one can accuse this People of the Middle Way of not caring, of not being compassionate.

John Calvin was trained in law and forensics, and much of his life he was both cleric and city manager. From that day to the present those trained in law and in process seem very comfortable among Presbyterians. Our system of government does not allow us to acquiesce in the decisions made on high nor to agree to the demands of the throngs. Instead, we must negotiate, compromise, deal, perfect the nuances of language and follow the process of legislation. Thus, we have a highly political heritage, which requires us to perfect both the skills of negotiation and process. No wonder we make good leaders in business and government!

Our Latin motto is "*Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda*," which means that we Presbyterians believe God has called us to be "the Church reformed, always reforming, according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit." (This is vastly different from the erroneous view of some that we are to "change and always be changing.") The difference, of course, is the phrase "by the Word of God and the call of the Spirit." In practice, this motto requires Presbyterians ever to be willing to review what Scripture says about any subject again and again. We are willing to study the same subjects over and over again, believing as we do that the Teacher of the Scripture, the Holy Spirit, always potentially has more to say to believing hearts and listening ears out of the same revealed Word of God available to us for centuries. Thus, we Presbyterians seek ever to be a study people and a thinking people, using our God-given brains to go with our God-redeemed hearts.

Our systems often move slowly, but they do move surely. God's way is ultimately discovered and supported by most Presbyterians most of the time. We also are a family of faith which writes down our convictions; indeed, we have a whole book of such written convictions, called confessions, statements, creeds, catechisms and declarations, which our ordinands must support in their ordination vows. Thus, the Presbyterian faith is not only orthodox (in the usual meaning of that word), but we are also "confessional," meaning "true to our written statements of faith."

This People of the Middle Way is grace-filled, open and inviting all seekers to discover Jesus Christ and walk with us in faith as we seek together to love and serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All believers are welcome to the Family!

A Brief History of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville

1785 – The Rev. Thomas B. Craighead, a Presbyterian minister and graduate of Nassau Hall at Princeton, comes to the Cumberlands to begin a school. He is the first minister to arrive in Nashville, and establishes Presbyterian as the first denomination to be represented by a minister.

1801 – The Rev. William Hume arrives from Scotland to lead the outpost of the westward movement in the Cumberland country as a missionary to the natives. He is credited more than any other minister for sustaining its earliest ministry.

1814 – Gideon Blackburn (with a committee of six women and one man) goes to the county courthouse to formerly charter the church, called Nashville Presbyterian Church, which already had been in existence about 28 years.

1820 – The Rev. Allan Dirchfield Campbell joins the faculty of Cumberland College as a professor, and the Nashville Presbyterian Church called him to be its minister.

1832 – The church burns to the ground.

1833 – The Rev. John Todd Edgar called as minister of the church.

1841 – Prominent members of First Church found Second Presbyterian Church; Nashville Presbyterian Church is renamed First Presbyterian Church.

1848 – Fire destroys the twelve-year-old church, but no records are destroyed as in the previous fire. Construction of a new Egyptian Revival building (current Downtown Presbyterian Church), designed by William Strickland, is begun. Stricklin is also the renowned architect of the Tennessee Statehouse, and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church downtown.

1851 – The Egyptian Revival church is dedicated on Easter Day.

1862 – The City of Nashville and the church are occupied during the Civil War. The church's minister Joseph Bardwall goes south along with many members of the church.

1865 – The church building, which had been used as a hospital during the war, is released by the Union and given back to the congregation.

1865 – Robert Franklin Bunting, a renowned war hero among Confederate chaplains, is called to be the church minister.

1894 – A. G. Adams Church, named for the esteemed elder of First Church and Sunday School pioneer, marks the start of Martha O'Bryan.

1894 – The Rev. James I. Vance begins his first of two tenures as minister of the church.

1900 – James Vance is called to become the minister of a Reformed Church of America congregation in Newark, New Jersey. The Rev. William T. Anderson is called as minister of First Presbyterian Church.

1901 – The church grows to 1,074 members, 16 elders, 14 deacons.

1909 – All nineteenth and twentieth century elders were appointed for life and served as long as they could be active. (This policy was changed in 1945.)

1910 – The Rev. James I. Vance returns for his second pastorate at the end of 1910; he is also made Chairman of the Board of Foreign Missions.

1914 – Second location of the Martha O'Bryan House is a small frame cottage on Joe Johnston Avenue near the site of the old Nashville stockyards.

1915 – The church was divided on the need for an assistant minister and a new Sunday school building, and ultimately ended up with both additions. Church elder Henry Hibbet was the architect for this addition, which included a Sunday school chapel and gathering place, as well as fourth floor offices to house the Board of Foreign Mission for the PCUS.

1919 – After World War I, "pew rents" (custom of asking the pew-holders to give the amount of their rent in addition to their other contributions) are done away with.

1920 – James I. Vance leads the General Assembly that voted to move Southwestern College (later to be named Rhodes College) from Clarksville to Memphis. First Church made a significant capital gift to facilitate the move of the college, which occurred in 1925. Austin Peay State University now occupies the former campus of Southwestern College at Clarksville.

1928 – Southern Presbyterians give over 1.5 million dollars to foreign missions with 484 missionaries in the field. This work is centered at FPC where the congregation has built its new Sunday school building to house the Board of Foreign Missions on the top floor. James I. Vance remains the executive secretary of the mission board.

1934 – Dr. Thomas C. Barr becomes the first associate minister in the history of the old church.

1936 – Dr. James I. Vance retires, and Dr. Thomas C. Barr succeeds Vance. Moore Memorial Church (which was founded by FPC former members) becomes Westminster Presbyterian Church.

1940 – First Director of Music, Frederick Baumgartner, is hired.

1942 – Dr. Thomas Barr had an ardent group of supporters within the congregation, but not enough to continue to lead the church. This conflict led to the General Assembly establishing the rule that existing associate ministers were not eligible to become ministers of the same congregation where they served. The Trinity Presbyterian Church is established (with 275 charter members) headed by Dr. Thomas Barr.

1943 – Search committee finds Dr. Walter Rowe Courtenay who was voted in by the congregation.

1945 – Dr. Courtenay set up a rotation system for all church officers, although this was a monumental change for the church, FPC was the last Presbyterian Church in the city to put in a rotation system; officers were still all male.

1946 – The 11 o'clock service at FPC is broadcast over WSM Radio.

1948 – The decision is reached to buy property on Franklin Pike for youth work and chapel. The Martha O'Bryan Center moves to east Nashville.

1949 – A house and fifty-five acres of land are purchased from John and Susan Cheek, to be used for a weekday school for young children, Sunday evenings for youth meetings, and for a summer day camp. The seeds of Oak Hill School started as the "Oak Hill Country Day School," with a nursery school and kindergarten in these years. Soon a chapel was built in "Cheek House" that would host an early Sunday morning service. It would eventually be dedicated as Stanford Chapel.

1955 – Final agreement between the Session and a minority group for relocation of the church to the Oak Hill premises. Groundbreaking took place for an educational building.

1956 – The cornerstone is laid for the new sanctuary at 4815 Franklin Road.

1957 – *Life Magazine* featured the Six Best Easter Sermons, with FPC's own Walter Courtenay listed as "one of six notable American pastors." The new sanctuary is dedicated in November.

1961 – Oak Hill School started from existing kindergarten.

1965 – The Rev. Arch MacNair was named Associate Minister for Pastoral Care. Dr. Courtenay had a weekly newspaper column in the *Nashville Banner*, which often published the texts of his sermons.

1966 – FPC grew to 2,362 members.

1970 – Dr. Courtenay, considering retirement, bought a farm; the church builds a house for the Courtenay's.

1971 – The Rev. Cortez Cooper from First Presbyterian Church, Marietta, Georgia was installed as the new Senior Minister. The new organ and choir were moved from the chancel to the balcony.

1973 – The PCA was formed by about 100,000 people who withdrew from the PCUS over issues of biblical interpretation, the civil rights movement and the role of women in the church.

1978 – Oak Hill School's Clara Harris is replaced by Betty Moore. Tension erupted over control of the curriculum between the Rev. Cooper and the faculty, board and teaching staff.

1970s – The church grew rapidly under Cortez Cooper's dynamic leadership, but conflicts began to arise around issues of theological differences he has with the PCUS. One sign of this theological narrowness is the decision to forbid the June Ramsey Class to meet on Sunday mornings in the Cheek House.

1981 – Cortez Cooper resigns as Senior Minister. Session records show that 521 communicant members, all active, left FPC with Cooper to start Christ Presbyterian Church PCA. The Rev. Andrew Bird was called as interim minister and the June Ramsey Class is reinstated. In September, Dr. William T. Bryant was called as new Senior Minister.

1983 – Historic reunion of the PCUS and UPUSA to form the PC(USA). A new staff was hired; two Associate Ministers and a Director of Christian Education. "Yoke Ministry" was created between FPC and the Downtown Presbyterian Church.

1984 – Construction began on a new library wing with administration offices. Local mission and outreach work was increased.

1986 – The talented Rev. Mark DeVries is called out of Princeton Theological Seminary to begin his work as the Associate Minister for Youth Ministry.

1990 –Wednesday Night School of Christian Living was started under the leadership of Bill Caruso, who came in 1990 to serve as Director of Adult Education.

1991 – First Mexico Mission Trip was held as a multi-generational mission opportunity.

1993 – Endowment Fund was started. Oak Hill Day Camp was fully accredited.

1994 – Inquirers' class was started by Bill Bryant for prospective members. Sissy Wade replaced Betty Moore as the new headmistress of Oak Hill School. Dr. Bill Bryant resigned to lead The Outreach Foundation, a missions support organization of the PC(USA). Dr. Jack Lancaster was named interim minister.

1995 – Dr. Jack Lancaster's heart condition caused him to resign suddenly.

1996 – Dr. Wade Huie was then called to serve as second interim minister. Crud Day was established for the youth of the church under Mark DeVries' leadership. The Rev. Tom Tyndall from Lakeland, Florida installed as the new Senior Minister.

1998 – Ted Martin was installed as the Minister of Recreational Ministries.

1999 – FPC ordained its first woman minister, Rev. Sandra Randleman. An informal summer worship service was held during the summer as a third service; the service was well attended, but becomes a source of controversy in the church. A study to explore a possible capital campaign reveals a deep opposition to the Rev. Tyndall's leadership.

2000 – The Rev. Tom Tyndall resigned after conflict over his leadership. The Rev. John David Burton was named interim minister. Oak Hill School started a capital campaign to add the rotunda and a new classroom wing.

2001 – Sissy Wade resigns as head of Oak Hill School. The Rev. Roland Perdue was named second interim minister. Oak Hill School hired Jack Stanford as interim head, and completed a $5 million school facilities renovation and expansion.

2002 – Dr. Todd Jones was called to serve as Senior Pastor and Head of Staff, preaching his first sermon at FPC on Easter Sunday. Claire Wilkins joined Oak Hill School as head of school. Dr. Thomas Duncan Walker was brought on as Parish Associate.

2005 – Dr. Stuart Gordon was hired as Associate Pastor for Discipleship.

2006 – FPC initiated its first congregation-wide capital campaign since 1984, Milestones & Cornerstones. The church added 30K square feet of space for a new children's ministry wing and adult education, as well as new staff offices. The project also renovated Courtenay Hall, and added a new 30K square foot enrichment center to be used jointly by Oak Hill School and the church. The campaign goal was $20,000,000, and the construction was completed and dedicated in November of 2008. Oak Hill School also added a 12K square foot library, dedicated in 2012 in honor of long-time church member and Oak Hill School employee, Roxie Gibson.

2010 – Dr. Samuel M. Cooper was hired as Executive Pastor.

2012 – The Rev. Keith Gunter was hired to plant a new church in Hendersonville, TN. FPC celebrates Todd Jones' tenth anniversary as senior minister and names the Session Room in his honor. The Rev. Catherine Foster hired as Associate Pastor for Young Adults Ministry.

2014 – The Rev. Adam DeVries was hired as Associate Pastor for Youth & Their Families.

2015 – Joshua Rodriguez was hired as Director of Young Adults & High School Outreach. Josh was ordained in 2017 and became Associate Pastor for Young Adults Ministry, replacing Catherine Foster.

2016- Rev. John Musgrave, a retired Presbyterian minister, joined the church as a Parish Associate.

2019 – The Rev. Sarah Bird was hired as Associate Pastor of Discipleship & Engagement. Popular church-wide "Communities of Belonging" program began under her guidance.

2019- Subsequent to Dr. Todd Jones' retirement after leading FPC for 17 years, the church called Dr. Ryan Moore from Tulsa, OK as the 20th Head Pastor of First Presbyterian Church.

2020- Like the rest of America, FPC suspended in-person worship due to the Covid pandemic. The church began to livestream the 8:30 A.M. worship service each week thereafter.

2021- Long time children's department head, Deb O'Brien, retired and is replaced by Mallory Hammond.

2023-Adam DeVries resigned and was replaced as Director of Youth Programming by Gage Arnold.

2023-Frank Coyle was hired as Church Executive.

2024-Mike and Annette Crout retired as Mission Coordinators.

2024-Dr. Stuart Gordon left after having served FPC since 2005. Rev. Sarah Hill is hired as a part-time Parish Associate to help out until a replacement is found.

2025-The Sullivan Garden and Columbarium landscape renewal was completed during the year.

2025-The Oak Hill Athletic Field, after years of negotiation and controversy, was completed.

2025-Dr. Sandra Randleman was seriously injured and hospitalized for much of the year; Rev. Sarah Hill was changed from part-time to full-time Parish Associate to fill in until her return.

2025-FPC participated in the "Nashville Fellows," the church welcomed four interns for a nine-month program.

2025-Adrian Taylor was named Director of Missions.

2025-Mallory Hammond was ordained and installed as a Parish Associate.

2026-Dr. Sandra Randleman was named Parish Associate for Congregational Care, Gage Arnold was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families, and Dr. Darren Kennedy was installed as Associate Pastor for Discipleship.

Essential Presbyterianism

The Head of the Church

All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ by Almighty God, who raised Christ from the dead and set Him above all the rule and authority, all power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is His body.

Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission to the world, for its building up and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. It belongs to Christ alone to rule, to teach, to call and to use the Church as He wills, exercising His authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of His Kingdom.

Christ gives to His Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its officers and ordinances. Insofar as Christ's will for the Church is set forth in Scripture, it is to be obeyed. In the worship and service of God and the government of the Church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that He is its hope and that the Church, as Christ's body, is bound to His authority and thus is free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God. (*Book of Order*, F-1.02)

The Great Ends of the Church

The great ends of the Church are:

the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
the maintenance of divine worship;
the preservation of the truth;
the promotion of social righteousness; and
the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. (*Book of Order*, F-1.0304)

Presbyterian Confessions

Presbyterians, like most Christians in church history, have found it exceedingly helpful to put our theology in writing and to support and adopt creeds and confessions (statements of faith) of Christians in other eras and places, if those meet scriptural standards. Thus, we Presbyterians have affirmed a book full of confessions, creeds and catechisms from many ages and peoples. These are published and available for study in our *Book of Confessions*, a volume to which our ordinands (officers) must affirm support; ordinary members have no obligation to be led or guided by these, though the theology found in this book will appear in many sermons and in most of the suppositions underlying what is said and done in a Presbyterian church. Thus, in the Presbyterian Church confessions indirectly impact the congregation, rather than directly. However, often portions of such will appear as "affirmations of faith" within our worship services. By such statements of faith "the church declares to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, and what it resolves to do."

Within our *Book of Confessions* there are currently eleven documents. Below are brief summaries of each, their dates, names, occasions and key issues:

The Nicene Creed of the fourth century sought to clarify for all time certain key doctrines dealing with the person and work of Jesus Christ and the nature of the Trinity. It was the result of a conference called by the

newly converted Roman Emperor Constantine who sought to reduce religious bickering and to develop a unified Christian Church to bring greater cohesion to his Roman Empire.

The Apostles' Creed, the shortest document and the most popular, reflects second century baptismal statements, though all the ideas contained therein may be found in the sermons recorded in the New Testament. Actually formalized in the fifth century, the name indicates its intention to proclaim what the apostles themselves taught respecting the "essentials" of the Triune God and basic Christian dogma.

The Scots Confession of 1560 reflects the views of John Knox, who had recently returned from training in Geneva under John Calvin, in his efforts to lead Scotland out of the Romanism of Queen Mary and into the Protestant Reformation. This lengthy statement sought to clarify the biblical teachings its authors believed the Roman Church had rejected or misunderstood.

The Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 reflects its German origin and combined Lutheran and Reformed heritage. At Freiderich III's request, the two Swiss reformers who authored this catechism (a question-and-answer rote memory method of learning) sought to lay out in plain language (for that day) the practical meaning of this reformed faith to daily living. This catechism's joy, gratitude and uplifting spirit still gains modern supporters for its winsome theology and inspiring style.

In 1566, the Swiss Reformed Churches developed *The Second Helvetic Confession*, which provided much clarification in a confused day, especially about the Church and the Christian experience of believers. Originally written as a personal statement of faith by Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's son-in-law and successor, this lengthy document noted both what to support and what to reject, biblically speaking.

The Westminster Confession and its sister documents, *The Larger Catechism* and *The Shorter Catechism*, were the results of four years (1643-1646) of scholarly work by pious leaders in England. These leaders had been commissioned to develop a unifying faith-document for the Protestants of the British Isles by the Long Parliament. These doctrinal statements sought to deal systematically with the whole of Christian theology, basing its work on a strong commitment to Scripture, a high view of the sovereignty of God, and God's call to humankind through His covenant. These have proven the most influential creeds upon American Presbyterianism.

In 1934, *The Theological Declaration of Barmen* defied the Nazis and declared that these German Christians were prepared to die to put Jesus Christ before Hitler. The format was to declare what its authors supported and what they rejected as false doctrine or wicked actions.

Following the civil rights movement and anarchy in parts of America, *The Confession of 1967* sought to explicate the theme and duty of reconciliation in a badly divided America. This modern creed, greatly influenced by neo-orthodoxy, caused much conflict and dissension before it was finally adopted by a then-liberal United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, a product of a reunion between Northern Presbyterians and a branch of Scot Presbyterians in 1958.

A Brief Statement of Faith, adopted in 1991 by the PC(USA), was a promised by-product of the 1983 reunion between the Northern Presbyterians (UPCUSA) and the Southern Presbyterians (PCUS), which formed the PC(USA). It seeks in a few lines to provide an overview of contemporary Presbyterian faith which is both faithful to "the ten essential tenets of Reformed Faith" and inclusive of newer theological insights from Scripture. It does not cover all theological bases and does not claim to be comprehensive.

Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith

The Reformed Faith has certain characteristics and convictions without which it cannot exist. These necessary convictions are identified in our *Book of Order*.

The first two we share with Christians everywhere and in all time; thus, they are drawn from the faith of the Church catholic: "The mystery of the triune God" and "the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ."

1) Trinity
2) Incarnation

The next two we share with those who also were a part of the sixteenth century renewal of the church; that is, from the "faith of the Protestant Reformation": "The rediscovery of God's grace in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures" and "grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone."

3) Justification by Grace through Faith
4) Scripture Is the Word of God

The remaining six tenets are our family characteristics, which come from the "faith of the Reformed Tradition." Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love. Other great themes of the Reformed tradition include: (1) The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation; (2) covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the Church according to the Word of God; (3) a faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation; (4) the sin of idolatry, which makes anything created ultimate, rather than worshipping only the Creator; and (5) the necessity of obedience to the Word of God, which directs us to work for justice in the transformation of society.

5) Sovereignty of God
6) Election
7) God's Involvement in the Covenant Community
8) Stewardship of Our Resources and the Earth
9) Sin of Idolatry
10) Commitment to Justice and Obedience

A Church That Defines and Affirms Its Faith

by Jack Rogers *(excerpts)*

Our church has a *Book of Confessions*: Historic statements or creeds, that proclaim what we believe. Why do we have them? Do we still need them? What does it mean when we "confess," or profess, our faith publicly? These are questions Presbyterians are discussing today.

At the reuniting General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1983, a Task Force on the Confessional Nature of the Church held open hearings on these questions. A former Moderator of the General Assembly asked, "How can candidates for ordination receive the essential tenets [beliefs] of the Reformed faith before they know what those tenets are?" A denominational executive lamented, "We need to point to the distressing reality that there is biblical amnesia." A seminary professor observed, "We have a great illiteracy regarding our confessional tradition." A pastor pleaded, "We have all but lost our confessional identity. What does it mean to be a Reformed Christian?" And a layperson declared, "The average church member wants to know the difference between Christian and non-Christian, and what the distinctives of the Presbyterian denomination are."

How Do We Receive and Adopt?

It is time we put an end to the pious hypocrisy into which we force many, if not most, of the office-bearers in our church. All ruling elders and deacons are required to take the same vow that pastors take with regard to the confessions of the church. At the time of their ordination, our lay officers are asked, "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?"

It is surely difficult to receive and adopt essential tenets if no one has told you what they are. It is even more difficult to be instructed and led by the confessions if you have never studied them. It would probably be chilling to discover how few office-bearers of the church have ever been asked to take that vow seriously. This is

not to criticize the lay leaders. Quite the opposite; they can hardly be held accountable for something their pastors have not taught them. And the pastors are hard-pressed to teach if there are no materials available to make these confessions from past times accessible to contemporary people. We are simply reaping the fruit of the "theological amnesia" of the past several decades.

Can We Be Reformed and Always Reforming?

Presbyterians hold two values in tension. One is the freedom of individual conscience; the other is the integrity of the community's standards. This tension is as old as American Presbyterianism. It represents our desire to be always reforming, granting freedom to those who seek to reform us. It equally represents our desire to be Reformed, maintaining a continuity with the past which has shaped our identity. We have been healthiest as a church when we have maintained a balance between these two values. In earlier centuries, we have split along New Side/Old Side and New School/Old School lines when we have not been able to maintain the tension.

The balance between these two values has always been maintained in terms of a delicate compromise embodied in the Adopting Act of 1729. When *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Catechisms were adopted as the confessional standards of American Presbyterianism, office-bearers were asked to agree to the standards "as being, in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine." The link between freedom of conscience and the integrity of the community's standards was the notion of "essential and necessary articles." Freedom was allowed in nonessentials, and the standards were upheld in essentials.

The concept of "essential and necessary articles" fell on bad times during the Fundamentalist/ Modernist controversy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The dominant conservative party in 1910 enforced a selection of five articles from the Confession which were considered essential and necessary. These articles symbolized for many in the denomination an attempted imposition of a system of theology and biblical interpretation against which they protested. Severe polarization in the church led in 1927 to the report of a special theological commission and the General Assembly's ruling that no one, not even the General Assembly, should designate essential and necessary articles that definitively interpreted the Confession, except in application to specific judicial cases. This decision opened the present era of theological pluralism. It reflected a revulsion against theological conflict and heresy trials. Freedom of conscience had triumphed.

In the 1970s, we discovered that we could not function without the concept of "essential and necessary articles." A young applicant for ordination argued that he could be a loyal Presbyterian without participating in the ordination of women because that was a "nonessential point in Presbyterianism." The Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly declared, to the contrary, that "it is evident from our Church's confessional standards that the Church believes the spirit of God has led us into new understandings of this equality before God." Now the integrity of standards was invoked and the concept of essential articles reintroduced.

The tension between freedom of conscience and the integrity of the community's standards is often difficult to sustain. But we are most whole when we do. The key is knowing what is essential.

Essential Tenets, or Beliefs

Our *Book of Order* gives significant guidance on what it is essential to believe. In its "The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Chapter Two, The Church and Its Confessions, (F-2.01)" the governmental handbook of our denomination is keyed to the theological heritage of the church. The *Book of Order* declares that the creeds and confessions of the church identify us as a community, guide us in studying Scripture, and summarize the essence of the Christian tradition. Thus, the confessions equip us for the task of proclaiming the good news. The chapter cautions us as to the serious nature of these subordinate standards, saying, "The church is prepared to counsel with or even to discipline one ordained who seriously rejects the faith expressed in the confessions." And it reminds us that a more exacting process is required to change the confessions than is needed to alter matters of government, discipline or service.

The *Book of Order* then proceeds to list doctrines, which we can take to be essential and necessary. Two are noted as shared with the church catholic, or universal: The mystery of the Trinity, and the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ. Two are identified with our affirmation of the Protestant Reformation: Justification by grace through faith, and Scripture as the final authority for salvation and the life of faith. Six are declared to express the faith of the Reformed tradition. (These are not exclusively the product or property of that branch of the Protestant tradition named Reformed. The desire of these Reformers was simply to recover the simplicity of Christianity as professed and practiced by the early church. But as they developed their understanding of the Christian faith in their own particular time, place and context, they necessarily and understandably emphasized certain motifs more than others.) The six themes stated in the *Book of Order* as characteristic of the Reformed tradition are God's sovereignty; God's choosing (election) of people for salvation and service; the covenant life of the church, ordering itself according to the Word of God; a faithful stewardship of God's creation; the sin of idolatry, which makes anything created ultimate, rather than worshiping only the Creator; and the necessity of obedience to the Word of God, which directs us to work for justice in the transformation of society.

Latitude Within Limits

The listing in the *Book of Order*, while not exhaustive, is helpful. It indicates that not everything in the confessions is of equal weight. Some things are more important, more characteristic, more useful for today than others. Since the confessions are outline guides to the main teachings of Scripture, it is important for us to develop an understanding of their essential tenets. A sound rule of biblical interpretation is that obscure and secondary elements are to be interpreted in light of the clear and central teachings. So with the confessions; we must discern the central motifs and differentiate them from details which are related only to the cultural setting and theological situation of that particular time and place. There is some latitude regarding what it is essential to believe and act upon. The confessions do not speak with one voice in the fashion of a seminary textbook in theology. Nor do they speak so diversely that nothing coherent and constructive emerges. There is a general harmony, a broad consensus and a functional unity to which we can appeal. The confessions pose helpful limits. They are useful in defining our roots in the Reformed community and the unique resources, which that community has to offer in the ecumenical mix. The confessions also provide a latitude, even a demand, for us to confess our faith anew in every generation. There is yet more light to break forth, not just from our individual minds or our group experience but from the Word of God. It is to the seeking of that biblical light that the confessions continually direct us. It is by new insights gleaned from the Word of God that the Reformed community is to be continually reforming itself. Knowing the outline of what our forerunners in the faith felt to be central will free us to seek further depths, both of clarity and commitment.

Setting the Margins

A personal computer has preprogrammed margins, on the left and on the right. Within these margins, we have complete freedom to write what we want, changing and experimenting at will. We can also alter these margins, making them wider or narrower. But we cannot function without some kind of margin on either side. Neither can we in our denomination live peaceably together and move forward in mission unless we know what is essential and necessary for us and in which area we have freedom of individual conscience. We need to be confessional – positively appropriating our Reformed heritage. Then we are free to be confessing – declaring our contemporary convictions, informed by Scripture, and reforming the church and the world. That means that church members, and especially office-bearers, will function better as they become conscious of and comfortable with the "essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church."

Presbyterian Discipline: Questions & Answers

1. Where does one find the "Rules of Discipline" for the PC(USA)?
The fourth section of the *Book of Order*.

2. What are the five purposes of church discipline?
1) To honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ;
2) To preserve the purity of the church;
3) To correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration;

4) To restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and
5) To secure the just, speedy and economical determination of proceedings.

3. How important are procedural safeguards in the exercise of church discipline?
It is the intention of the Rules of Discipline to provide in all respects and to all members procedural safeguards and due process.

4. The power of Jesus Christ vested in His Church is for what purpose and how should it be exercised?
This power of Jesus Christ for discipline within His Church is for the building up of the body of Christ, not for destroying it, and for redeeming, and not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath so that the great ends of the church may be achieved.

5. Church discipline is exercised within the context of pastoral care and oversight by means of administrative review. What does "administrative review" mean?
Administrative review is the supervision of lower governing bodies by higher governing bodies within the whole system of government of the church for the maintenance of its peace, unity and purity.

6. Church discipline is also exercised within the context of pastoral care and oversight by means of judicial process. What are the two kinds of judicial process?
Judicial process is the exercise of authority by the governing bodies of the church for: (1) the prevention and correction of irregularities and delinquencies by governing bodies, or by a council or any agency of the General Assembly – known as a remedial case, and (2) the prevention and correction of offenses by persons – known as disciplinary cases.

7. How do the governing bodies of presbytery, synod and General Assembly exercise discipline?
Through permanent judicial commissions which finally act for the governing body.

8. How do sessions exercise discipline?
The session itself conducts trials.

9. Define "an irregularity," "a delinquency" and "an offense."
An irregularity is an erroneous decision or action. A delinquency is an omission or failure to act. An offense is any act or omission by a member or officer of the church that is contrary to Scripture or the constitution of the PC(USA).

10. Distinguish between "a dissent" and "a protest."
A dissent is an expression of disagreement with the action or decision of a governing body and is made during the meeting of that governing body. A protest is stronger; it is a written statement, supported by reasons, expressing disagreement with the action/decision of the governing body, a disagreement built on the conviction that that governing body has committed an irregularity or delinquency. If notice of a protest is given at that meeting of the governing body, it may be entered in writing later. If the protest is composed in a respective manner, it may be entered in the body's minutes; the governing body has the right to enter a written response.

11. What are "the general review" powers placed in the session?
The session has the right and obligation to review generally all the proceedings and actions of all committees, boards and organizations in that particular church. Such an annual summary shall be incorporated in the session's minutes.

12. Where may be found the rules for conducting administrative review and the two kinds of judicial process?
In Rules of Discipline in the *Book of Order*, as the fourth section.

13. Name the degrees of church censure available to governing bodies in disciplinary cases.

In a disciplinary case the degrees of church censure are rebuke, temporary exclusion of ordained office or membership, and removal from ordained office or membership.

14. Define "rebuke."

Rebuke is the lowest degree of censure for an offense and consists of setting forth the character of the offense, together with reproof, which shall be pronounced along with prayer.

15. Define the discipline of "temporary exclusion."

Temporary exclusion from the exercise of ordained office or membership is a higher degree of censure for a more aggravated offense and shall be for a definite period not to exceed two years. During this time, the offender must refrain from exercising any function of ordained office, or if a member, from any privileged afforded to church members.

16. Define the highest degree of discipline, which is "removal from office or membership."

Removal from office is the censure by which the offender's ordination and election are set aside, and the offender is removed from all offices without removal from membership.

17. What is an "appeal?"

An appeal is the transfer to the next higher governing body or a remedial or disciplinary case, after judgment at the lower level has been rendered, for the purpose of obtaining a review of the proceedings and judgment to correct, modify, vacate or reverse the proceedings and judgment.

18. What four kinds of evidence may be presented to alter the degree of censure?

"If the accused is found guilty or after the guilty plea, the session or permanent judicial commission should hear evidence as to the extent of the injury suffered, mitigation, rehabilitation, and redemption.... The session or permanent judicial commission shall then meet privately to determine the degree of censure to be imposed." (D-11.0403e)

The Presbyterian Belief System

What do Presbyterians believe? *The Presbyterian belief system* is based upon *the theological presuppositions* contained within the questions used as the Five Church Vows. Five other avenues may also provide insight.

First, a brief review of the *five points of classic Calvinism,* known by the acronym "TULIP," provides significant information regarding Presbyterian theological roots.

Next, the *Book of Order* in its ordination vows provides *an ordering by priority for spiritual authority*. Knowing who has top authority and what should draw our suspicions can save Presbyterian believers much grief and heartache.

In addition, the essential tenets of Reformed faith, as identified by the *Book of Order,* help us understand what is uniformly important to those who hold a Presbyterian and Reformed theological perspective.

The Presbyterian Church: Its Beliefs, by Ernest Trice Thompson, has been helpful to many in explaining Presbyterian theology and beliefs. It is reprinted here for the help it offers others in their search.

For those who just want a statement about the main difference between the Presbyterian Church and a specific other denomination, the reprinted article, *The Reformed Faith...What Is It?* from *The Presbyterian Journal*, has proved of much assistance.

Five Points of Classic Calvinism

Total Depravity teaches that all humankind is helpless before God due to human sin, which is resident in all areas and compartments of every human life. This doctrine does not hold that each person is as bad as he/she can be, but rather that all of us are infected with sin in every area of our lives. Thus, we humans utterly need God's intervention to save us from ourselves and our own choices.

Unconditional Election declares that, no matter how we human beings get involved in the process of eternal salvation, clearly "God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation." God is the only eligible voter in this election of eternity. How thankful we are that He chose us – and that not of our doing but out of His grace and for our serving!

Limited Atonement denotes that the Cross of Calvary was adequate to cover the penalty due for the sins of those whom God in Christ determined to save. Its further teaching that the Cross was efficacious for those saved, and them alone, is less accepted by today's Presbyterians than these other teachings. Ben Rose seeks to clarify the meaning of this doctrine by saying: "…Christ's sacrificial death on the cross – His atonement – was and is specific, limited and effective. It was specifically designed for and limited to those whom the Father had given the Son; and it effectively accomplished their salvation."

Irresistible Grace declares that God's grace never fails and is therefore "invincible." God in Christ through the Holy Spirit "graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ." God's goodness fulfills His desire to save those whom He has chosen.

Perseverance of the Saints is a theological way of saying that God never loses those who are His. He is always faithful and does not and will not let those who are His children slip out of His hand; His patience in loving us to the end is beyond understanding but such a joy for those who experience this "assurance of salvation."

The Presbyterian Church: Its Beliefs

by Ernest Trice Thompson

The Presbyterian Church has definite beliefs, drawn directly from the Word of God, which are stated clearly. It holds the common Christian faith and cooperates fully with all other Christian people. Some of its important beliefs are summarized briefly in the paragraphs that follow:

God – God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1) is Sovereign Lord of the universe (Daniel 4:35). He has revealed himself partially through nature and fully in the Bible. His supreme revelation of Himself is in Jesus Christ. God is righteous in all His ways, loving in all His dealings. (2 Peter 3:9)

Man/Woman – Man/woman is a sinner, unable to save himself, and therefore needs a Savior. (Genesis 6:5-6; Romans 3:19-23; Romans 6:23a)

Christ – God, out of His great love, provided a Savior (John 3:16-17). This one and only Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son, born of a woman, and is therefore God and man, and as such is able to make reconciliation between God and man/woman. (Romans 3:24-26)

Salvation – For our sin Christ died on the cross, taking upon Himself our guilt and the penalty of sin that we might be forgiven and set free. (Romans 5:8; 8:1)

Faith – Salvation comes to us only through our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; John 3:14-15; Acts 16:30-31; Hebrews 7:25)

Repentance – Repentance from sin, which is more than sorrow for sin, is a turning away from sin unto newness of life in Christ. (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:37-38; Matthew 3:8)

The Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit leads to conviction of sin, to repentance and faith, and to a desire for

a new life, and so brings about the new birth without which no man/woman can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and He enables us to die more and more unto sin and to live more and more unto righteousness. (John 3:3-8; John 16:7-13)

The Bible – The Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God. (2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16)

The Organized Church – The organized church is a divine institution for the worship of God, the propagation of the faith, and the mutual comfort and strength of those who believe. (Matthew 16:16-18; Ephesians 5:23-27)

The Sacraments – There are only two of these holy ordinances instituted by Christ, wherein by outward signs, inward spiritual meanings and graces are conveyed to sincere participants – worthy receivers.

Baptism – Water baptism, a symbol of spiritual baptism, is the rite of entrance into the church; it is to be administered to all who believe in Christ and to their children as a token that they are members of the household of God. (Acts 16:14-15; Ephesians 6:4; Acts 16:32-33)

The Lord's Supper – This is a memorial of Christ's life and death and coming again. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

A Public Confession of Christ as Savior – A public confession of Christ as Savior is made by joining the church. (Matthew 10:32)

The Lord's Day – The first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath for public worship. After the resurrection of Christ the disciples met for prayer and worship on the first day of the week. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; John 20:19-26)

Christian Responsibility for Witnessing for Christ – A Christian has the responsibility of witnessing for Christ, and so helping to build up a human society permeated by the spirit of Christ. (Acts 1:8; John 1:34-42; 2 Corinthians 3:2-3)

The Bodily Resurrection of Christ – The resurrection of Christ was a bodily resurrection. There will also be a bodily resurrection of all men/women and recognition in life to come. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20-23; John 14:1-3)

The Second Coming of Christ – The second coming of Christ will be personal and glorious. It is ours to watch and work, and be ready when He comes. (Matthew 24:42-44)

The Final Judgment – There will be final judgment with Christ as the Judge; and there will be eternal blessedness for all those who in this life accept Jesus Christ as Savior and seek to follow Him as their Lord. (Acts 10:42; Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

The Reformed Faith… What Is It? (Copied from *The Presbyterian Journal*, October 4, 1972.)

A thoughtful church member asked her minister: "What is the Reformed Faith to which you so frequently refer? I hear much of the distinctives of the Reformed Faith without a clear indication as to what those distinctives are." Below is a paraphrase of the answer the minister gave:

The Reformed Christian believes that he/she is justified by faith in Jesus Christ through the immediate work of the Holy Spirit in his/her heart, hence he/she is not a Roman Catholic.

The Reformed Christian believes in the Trinity, therefore, in the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, so he/she is not a Unitarian.

The Reformed Christian believes in the sacraments and the Word of God as means of grace, so he/she is not a Quaker.

The Reformed Christian believes in a prior work of God's grace in the human heart leading to salvation, and in the predestination of all things according to God's sovereignty, so he/she isn't a Methodist.

The Reformed Christian believes that the priesthood of all believers has replaced a special priesthood, and that ordination is by the Holy Spirit and not by any power granted in human succession, so he/she isn't an Episcopalian.

The Reformed Christian believes that baptism represents the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believer, and that the promise is to believers and to their children who are also heirs of the covenant, so he/she isn't a Baptist.

The Reformed Christian believes in a representative government rather than a purely democratic government, so he/she isn't a Congregationalist.

In addition to these denominational distinctives, the Reformed Christian bases his/her relation to God and his/her hope of salvation on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, incarnate Son of God, crucified for our sins, raised for our justification, reigning in the hearts of His people by the Holy Spirit and coming again in time to judge the quick and the dead. He/she also believes in the fellowship of believers on earth and in fruitful Christian living.

Thinking Like a Presbyterian

Many years ago Joseph Gettys provided the PCUS with an invaluable booklet called, *Meet Your Church*, in order to encourage inquirers into Presbyterian membership. One particular chapter, "Thinking Like a Presbyterian," deserves passing on to a new generation of Presbyterians.

We start our "thinking with the Bible as our guide." Whatever the challenge before us, whatever we seek to do in life, whatever problem lies before us, we Presbyterians find it a natural habit early on to turn to Scripture to discover what God says which may be of help to us in our time of challenge, confusion or crisis. We understand that God's Holy Spirit is ever seeking to teach us what God's will is for our circumstances; Scripture is His first means of communicating with us.

We know instinctively that God is in charge, that God already knows what is happening and what the conclusion will be, and that God will bring good out of it, no matter how bad it may initially appear from our human viewpoint. We know our first and foremost task in this life is "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." We continue "thinking with God at the center of life." This keeps us from becoming self-centered or focused on our own problems, sins or failures. When we know the Father is the captain of the vessel, the sea storms seem less frightening. When we remember that the Creator of the Universe is our own personal "Abba," "Daddy," then we fear even the worst devils and fiercest creatures no more. We have been gifted with the comforting assurance that we are held in the hollow of His hand, that "He cares for us." What joy to know that "in life and in death we belong to God" and that "with believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

As we Presbyterian believers journey through life, we are reminded that we are to "keep Christ and the Holy Spirit as living realities." We know God's mercy, but we experience Him first-hand through Jesus Christ; later we come to know God as the Comforter, the shy Person of the Trinity, who never calls attention to Himself but always seeks to place the spotlight on Jesus. Presbyterians do not easily go off on tangents into "Jesus Only" or "Holy Ghost" extremes; we simply daily plod along happily knowing that God, the Triune One, wants us to have no wobbles in our balanced relationship with the Trinity. We know that Jesus saves us and that the Holy Spirit is personal, present and empowering us daily for God's good and glory.

As we live, it is important to Presbyterians to remember that in this life we can never become perfect; nor are we called to be "Messiah" to anyone else. Thus, we seek to "keep sin and salvation in our doctrine of redemption." Sin is not simply a past dragon once slain; sin is a nipping dog at our heels, alive and far too active in our lives. We Presbyterians know we never outgrow temptation and can always fall, so we attempt to cultivate

a humble spirit both about our own potential for renewed failure and our neighbor's imperfections. However, we seek to keep ever before our eyes the assurance of God's salvation in Jesus Christ, who on the tree did redeem unworthy folk like ourselves! Friends, this is both a healthy and a humble theological reality.

Presbyterians know our salvation comes from the Lord, that He took the initiative, that we are saved by His grace through our faith (which He provided). We have been taught the difference between the root of faith (salvation) and the fruit of faith (our good works). Therefore, we find it necessary to "keep the proper relationship between faith and works." Having been saved by His grace, we know our task is to produce for His glory a garden of the fruit of good works and pleasant blessings for others, all that the Father may be honored!

As maturing Presbyterian Christians, we have come to understand how important it is to worship God regularly both at home and in the sanctuary and to offer Him the gift of service to our fellow human beings, especially to those less fortunate than we. Thus, we do seek "to keep worship and work as spiritual twins." We have discovered that the best place ordinarily for Christians to grow is in God's Church; we remember "to keep the Church as the instrument of God" here on earth meant for our good and maturity in Christ.

Presbyterian Doctrine: Questions & Answers

1. ***What is involved in Vow #1 respecting one's faith in Jesus Christ?***
   It is clearly expected that every ordinand be a believing Christian, one who personally knows Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and who seeks to follow Him in life and who has experienced the full Godhead of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. ***How are Presbyterian ordinands expected to view Scripture?***
   It is clear that the Presbyterian ordinand is to accept the full Bible as God's **Word**, nothing less; the Bible, then, is God's Word by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is absolutely one-of-a-kind with total and complete authority in its trustworthy message, revealing to a lost world our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Other confessions add that the Bible is our only infallible rule for faith and practice.

3. ***Rank the spiritual authorities over our lives, by virtue of our vows.***
   Primary authority is Jesus Christ, the Living Word.
   Secondary authority is the Bible, the Written Word, as revealed through the Holy Spirit.
   Tertiary authority is the essential tenets of the Reformed faith, as found in our Presbyterian confessions.
   The *fourth authority* is the combined testimony and experience of the church, especially as determined by actions of governing bodies.
   The *fifth authority* is the personal understanding and experience of the individual Christian.

4. ***Who determines what the "essential tenets of the Reformed faith" are in respect to acceptance/rejection of a potential Ordinand?***
   The governing body of original jurisdiction so determines in each case. This means the session for deacons and ruling elders, and Presbytery for teaching elders. This determination is always open to the process of review by the higher governing bodies, under the process of appeal or complaint.

5. ***What is involved in "receiving and adopting the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of the church…"?***
   This acceptance of the plain teachings of our confessions must be sincere, personal, knowledgeable, active and wholehearted, but such does not necessarily involve total acceptance of every detail and minutia. There must be an appreciation, understanding and acceptance of the major concepts and essential tenets, teachings, viewpoints and distinctive dogmas contained herein.

6. ***Describe the Presbyterian system of doctrine.***
   The Presbyterian system of doctrine is Scriptural, Protestant, Evangelical and Calvinistic by intent. "Presbyterians do not hold that all other interpretations of Scripture are so wrong as to rule out of the Church those groups or individuals who adhere to them." (Kenneth J. Foreman, Sr.)

7. ***What are the five rival systems of doctrine to the Calvinistic system?***

The rivals of Calvinism are:

1) *Scholasticism* of the Roman Church;
2) *Traditionalism* of the Orthodox Churches;
3) *Socinianism* of the Unitarians and Modernists;
4) *Arminianism* of the Methodist and Holiness Churches; and
5) Any of a number of varieties of *cults*, arising out of the Protestant radical fringe: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Eddyism, Unity, etc.

8. Point out the most serious weakness in the rationale of each of these five rival systems.

Scholasticism is overly dependent upon the Sacraments and too often deteriorates into a "works-righteousness" religion.

Traditionalism is overly dependent upon the traditions of the Eastern Church, particularly through the eleventh century. Tradition seems to crowd out Scripture as the final arbiter of disputes.

Socinianism is so overly dependent upon human reason that it often discounts the supernatural to the extent of crowing man/woman and "reason" in the place of God; it thus often succumbs to another "works-righteousness" religion.

Arminianism tends to be overly dependent on human free will.

Cults are overly dependent upon extra-biblical sources and the personal visions and divine confrontations of their human leaders.

9. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

"The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man." *(Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 3)*

10. Who is Jesus and what did He do?

Jesus Christ is the God-man sent to save the world from their sins. Jesus was born of a virgin, as plainly revealed in Scripture. He is the Word made flesh. He is absolutely divine. His purpose in being born in a state of humiliation was that He might give His life as a ransom for many. He came to die in the place of sinners. The Bible teaches that Jesus substituted His life for ours on Calvary. Christianity is a religion of blood, the blood of Jesus Christ through which and by which the sins of believers are washed away. The preaching of the Cross as the only way of salvation is foolishness to the world, but it is the power of God to the sincere servant of God.

11. What is sin?

"Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." (*Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 14)*

12. What is the chief end of man?

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." (*Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 1)*

13. What is it to repent?

To repent is to be sorry for sin, and to hate and forsake it because it is displeasing to God. *(Westminster Confession of Faith, SVII:6)*

14. Do good works save?

Though the moral law is binding upon both Christian and non-Christian, it is never the means of justification, which is an act of God's free grace.

15. If you should die tonight and go into the presence of your Maker, why should He allow you to enter His Heaven?

Not because of anything I have done or not done.... Not because of my church membership, my moral conduct, my good works.... Not because I am an officer of the Presbyterian Church and sought to serve Him while I was on earth.... But because I trusted in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, whom by faith and through His grace I accepted as my Savior and Lord, in spite of my personal unworthiness.

16. What are the sacraments?

Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

17. What is the duty which God requires of man?

"The duty which God requireth of man is obedience to His revealed will." (*Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 39)*

18. Do Presbyterians believe that Jesus literally rose from the dead?

Most assuredly Presbyterians proclaim with vigor the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, as He overcame the grave, death and sin, and all the powers of Satan. Because He arose, we too are assured of our resurrection to be with Him forever. The doctrine of the resurrection is the keystone of the Christian theology. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

19. Do Presbyterians believe in "total depravity?"

Yes, the total depravity of man is recognized as true, despite the false brightness of modern humanism. This does not mean that all men/women are as bad as they can possibly be, but it does mean that man is "defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body." (*Westminster Confession of Faith, VI:2)*

20. How important is the Church to Presbyterians?

Presbyterians recognize the Church as an instrument of God in this age, an imperfect instrument to be sure, but one blessed by God. The Church is found wherever God's people meet to hear His Word properly preached and to celebrate His sacraments properly. But the Church always stands under the judgment of the ultimate authority, the Holy Scripture, and therefore is ever in need of reformation.

21. What do Presbyterians believe about the Christian life?

Presbyterians should teach and provide a living example of the Christian life of purity. The saints – God's called-out people – should live as saints of God everywhere. Their lives should be distinctive and different. Their values and goals in life should be peculiarly above those of the world. Ultimately, the test of purity of life is the test of one's beliefs. The orthodox Christian is the Christian with the clean life, one following in the steps of the Master.

22. What is the mission of the Presbyterian Christian and how does he/she enter into mission?

He/she, convinced of their own call from God and committed to God's Word, seeks to move out into the world in mission both to "the lost" and to "the poor" in twin ministries of evangelism and justice, both as a part of their church life and as a part of their witness in the world of work, school or recreation. Stewardship of all of one's resources – time, talent, treasure – is an obvious result of one's call to a life of Christian commitment.

23. What do Presbyterians mean when they affirm God's predestination?

Presbyterians reject the deterministic philosophy of "what will be, will be," but they cheerfully affirm "what God wills, will be!" We believe that God has a plan for His universe and for every man/woman and nation involved. We are sure that His plans are made for good and helpful purposes. We are taught that God from all eternity chose certain people to be saved and that in His own time and way He provides the needful means of salvation. No one is chosen because he/she is worthy or good enough, but only because God gives to him/her unmerited grace and love. Though Christ dies for all and offers His redemption to all, the condition of receiving it is faith. Those who refuse to meet the condition cannot accept the gift. (John 3:16)

24. Explain the difference between "the visible church" and "the invisible church."

The visible church is how we describe the particular congregations and denominations, as seen by the human eye as they function as human organizations. The invisible church refers to the one true Church as seen by God Himself and is composed of true believers in every age, in every visible church, in numerous human institutions.

25. Briefly describe how you would tell an inquirer how they might "be saved?"

Select your own way of expressing the biblical truth that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ. A simple, though effective, way is to emphasize these three aspects of faith:

1) Repent of one's sins (that is, turning away from what displeases God);
2) Believe in (to) Jesus Christ (that is, commit one's life into the personal responsibility of Jesus Christ,

as He is offered in the Bible); and

3) Accept God's GIFT into one's heart as Lord (that is, freely to unwrap God's gift of the Savior and deliberately enthrone Him as Lord in one's heart, immediately seeking to give Him obedience.) Such a process of repenting, believing and accepting changes the believer into a follower of Jesus Christ, which at the same time is the simplest and most profound description of a Christian.

The Sacraments

Presbyterians, like Protestants the world over, hold there are but two sacraments. We believe that a sacrament is an instruction from Jesus Christ to all His followers in which He commanded us to do a particular action (which is visible for all to see) which has a deep hidden and invisible spiritual meaning. Only communion (or the Eucharist) and baptism fulfill this definition, in our view.

A. The Lord's Supper or Eucharist or Communion

There are at least four ways to view the Lord's Supper:

1.) The Roman Catholic Church teaches "transubstantiation." This view holds that the elements of bread and wine actually become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, even though these changes remain unseen and unproven by science. This is a faith view. It also alters the way we handle the elements, view the Supper, and conduct our life around what comes then to be known as "the mass." Presbyterians do not hold this view.

2.) The Lutheran Church has altered this view a bit, but from our Reformed viewpoint, not enough. Lutherans teach and hold a view of the Communion called "consubstantiation." This view agrees that science cannot trace the alterations in the elements of bread and wine, but nevertheless such real changes do occur alongside the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ. This spiritual presence of Jesus Christ is quite different from the Roman view and is akin to the Reformed view; the stumbling block is the first part of this faith-statement; namely, that the elements are indeed changed into the real body and blood of our Lord. Thus, Presbyterians do not hold this view either.

3.) A third view is generally held by the Anabaptists and their descendants. This view rejects not only the Roman view and the Lutheran view, but also the Reformed view (to be described momentarily); this view holds that the Eucharist is to be viewed primarily as "an ordinance," a "memorial," an "anniversary," so to speak, of the Last Supper. Its primary purpose is to remind the believer of something that once happened and that Jesus will come again, as He promised. In some of these congregations this is celebrated something like a family meal, to which only members of that family may participate.

4.) The Reformed view of the Lord's Supper is neither high church (Roman Catholic and Lutheran) nor low church (Anabaptist). Rather, Reformed theology does not claim that the elements of bread and wine become in any actual physical sense the body and blood of our Lord. Instead, we believe that there are two unique things which happen at this celebration; first, there is the special spiritual presence of Jesus Christ in and among the elements but especially in the hearts of the believing participants (this is different from the presence of Jesus Christ regularly through the work of the Holy Spirit); and second, we believe that the elements are vital and real reminders of the brokenness of His body and the loss of His blood for human sinners such as you and me. Thus, we see and feel the real presence of Jesus Christ as we partake and sense the real price of His crucifixion (broken body and shed blood) as we see, handle and taste the elements of bread and wine through which this reality becomes known to us uniquely.

B. Baptism

There are at least three views of baptism:

1.) There is the view called "baptismal regeneration," by which adherents teach that baptism is God's initiation of persons into His Church in such a way that the action of baptism so-to-speak almost guarantees them a place in God's kingdom. This view is taught by the Roman Catholic Church and held by most Episcopalians and

some Lutherans and Methodists and a few Presbyterians. This view identifies the outward action and timing of baptism with an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ. Some who experience baptism with this kind of theology seem to deny the need for any kind of additional personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In other words, in practice, a baptized relationship with the Church takes the place of any need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who hold these views usually baptize by pouring or sprinkling.

2.) A second viewpoint regarding baptism is that called "believer's baptism," held by all who count the Anabaptists as their spiritual forebears. This view categorically denies any validity to any baptism of infants or children under the "age of understanding." In this view, baptism is reserved only for those who can knowledgeably choose to follow Jesus Christ; this limits candidates to older children, youth and adults. Hence, it is called "believer's baptism." Usually adherents of this view perform all their baptisms in the more dramatic way of immersing candidates, even those who in other traditions had already received baptism by sprinkling or pouring.

3.) The third view is held by most Presbyterians and many Lutherans and Methodists. This is called "covenant baptism," which may be administered both to believers and to their children, usually by sprinkling or pouring. In this view (the Reformed view) God's family is identified as being composed of believers and their children. These children are then baptized as infants as an initiation into the family of God; their parents take their faith vows for them and promise to train them in the faith. However, each of these children must, upon reaching the "age of understanding," discover what was earlier done for them by their parents; they must be confirmed in that personal faith, making that faith now their own. Salvation, then, is not tied to the act of baptism; it is tied to the faith of the believer, either a present faith or a future faith, as our God knows the future and is not (like we) tied to the present. Salvation is tied to God's action and God's gift of grace by which we discover faith and profess it; salvation is not tied to a human action of placing water on one's head. This is true whether we are talking about adults or infants, for salvation is never automatic. We would encourage you to hold this view of baptism.

Presbyterians accept the baptism of all other Christians, if such has been done "with water" and "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Presbyterians hold that baptism should only be done once; it is not a repeatable sacrament, while the Lord's Supper should be repeated frequently, especially when there is a need for a personal rededication to Jesus Christ.

Presbyterians believe that baptism of children is the New Testament way of including the children of believers, just as in the Old Testament there was the ritual of circumcision, which was used to incorporate the (male) children of believers into the family of God. We are grateful that in the New Testament the way was opened to include the female children of believers into "the household of faith." Thus, we see baptism taking the place of circumcision, just as the Eucharist took the place in the New Testament of Passover.

Church Government

How Presbyterians Govern Themselves

The church word for "governance" or "church government" is "polity," which comes from the same family of words as "politics" and "policy." The way a group of Christians gathered into a church functions and rules itself says much about their basic theology and influences what they believe and how they live.

Presbyterians put a great deal of effort into understanding Scripture regarding government and how we interconnect. Presbyterians believe our form of government is biblical, but by this statement we do not hold that all other forms of government are non-biblical. In fact, as we read Scripture, we also find elements of and suggestions supporting the other two major families of church government.

Presbyterians have sought to build our form of government or polity on seven principles for which we find biblical support:

1) Christ alone is head of the Church; all others are subordinate to Christ. Elected representatives seek first to represent Jesus Christ and only secondarily their constituents;

2) Scripture alone provides Christians with authority and responsibility one for another, but no one form of government is mandated by Scripture for all;

3) All believers equally are to serve as priests for each other; there is no hierarchy of spiritual power except that which honors Christ and upholds the responsibility of every believer for one another;

4) Church power is "joint," not "individual." All church power must be administered decently and in order to give God glory;

5) The unity of the Church is best seen in an interconnectedness (connectionalism) through representative assemblies, the larger with oversight over the smaller, rather than through a hierarchy or through mass democratic rule;

6) Under God the people, gathered in congregation, have the right to elect their own leadership, including teaching elder(s) and church officers; and

7) There must be a parity of ministry among the elected leaders. In our case, this is seen as parity between lay ruling elders and teaching elders (ministers of Word and Sacrament).

Presbyterianism, building upon these above principles, has offered the church and the world a unique gift of representative republican government centered on the lay presbyter (or ruling elder), who is not clergy but who exercises similar responsibility for governance as teaching elders (ministers of the Word and Sacrament). These lay ruling elders are ordained, in the same way and with the same responsibility for governance as the teaching elders.

These lay ruling elders, on occasion, may preach and with specific permission from the Presbytery on rare occasions and with due need, may administer the Lord's Supper (W-2.4012c). Ordinarily, the administration of the sacraments is the responsibility of a team of ruling elders, which shall include both a teaching elder and at least one ruling elder.

Decision-making at every level of governing body is a joint venture by both teaching elders and ruling elders. Every effort is made to require a parity of eldership in all governing bodies above the Session, so that in our annual General Assembly one-half of the voting commissioners are lay ruling elders.

We have discovered that those communions represented in COCU ("The Church of Christ Uniting") that other denominations do not have anything like our office of ordained lay ruling elder. Other denominations simply do not have the theology or the ecclesiology that would allow them to trust so much responsibility and power, duty and service to laity; they cannot fathom how we Presbyterians can trust laity in such a way and offer ordination to them equal to that of our clergy. This is unthinkable in the hierarchical polity with its "trickle-down" theory of power and responsibility. Among those who adhere to the "bubble-up" theory of the flow of power in the congregational polity, it is illogical to empower selected representatives of the congregation to rule the body and thereby to strip the total congregation of power and responsibility.

In addition, we should know that when we join a particular local Presbyterian Church congregation, we are also uniting with both our national denomination and the church universal. Thus, membership is threefold. All who join this particular Presbyterian local church are also joining the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); all who trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord also belong to His Church Universal.

Three Basic Forms of Polity

One form of polity is the Hierarchical or Episcopal Form, in which all power flows from top to bottom. [If power were water, this form would best be illustrated by the waterfall.] This theory is that God the Holy Spirit speaks to and gives power to those at the top, who then distribute power in a kind of trickle-down theory. Two major sub-forms illustrate this form of government: the monarchical and the oligarchical.

The monarchical sub-form concentrates power in the leader or single person at the top. In civil government this may be a king or dictator; in religious government we see this form in the Roman Catholic Church with its pope.

In the oligarchical sub-form power is found in the few at the top. In civil government this could be observed in rule by a council or a court or even by a political party; when it is by three the name might be "a troika;" in religious government this form is best illustrated by the Episcopal Church with its Council of Bishops.

The second kind of government is the Congregational Form, which assumes that all power by the Holy Spirit originates at the bottom or among the masses of democracy. [Again if power were water, in this form power would flow like a powerful fountain thrusting gushing water upwards.] Every member theoretically votes on every issue. There are few illustrations of such government functioning for lengthy periods of time in the civil realm, but we do have historically the Greek city-states and the New England town meetings. In the religious realm this form of government is the trademark of the Congregational Church and the Baptist Churches, among others. Over time a pure democracy tends to come under the authority of some strong indigenous leader who overrules all the rest.

The Middle Way within polity is the Presbyterian Form with its republican and representative characteristics. In the civil realm we see this governmental theory in our own United States government; in the religious arena this form is found in the Reformed and Presbyterian churches. This polity lies in between the previously described two; this is of all polity forms the most complicated. Within the Presbyterian system we believe the Holy Spirit first gives power and authority to the people gathered in congregation to elect their own leadership; the congregation chooses to become affiliated with the larger Presbyterian body. The congregation elects its ruling elders and teaching elder(s) who serve as their representatives and form a church governing body called a "session" to make all-important decisions for that local church. Presbyterians from all the sessions and churches within a region form a regional governing body called a "presbytery" to make all-important decisions for that region. Presbyterians from all the presbyteries and churches within several states form both a larger regional governing body called "synod" and with all presbyteries and churches within the nation form the national governing body called the "General Assembly." [Again, if power were water, the best illustration for how the Presbyterian representative polity works would be an automated "holy car wash," with water (power) coming from every direction.]

Ecclesiology Compared

These three basic forms of polity arise out of three separate sets of presuppositions regarding how God works in and among His people in governance and in revelation and call. Thus, each form of polity is supported by a unique view of ecclesiology; that is, a theology of "the church." Each can best be understood when an analogy is used to describe the group dynamics inherent in the governance system, as noted below in the chart:

WHAT THE CHURCH IS LIKE		
Congregational Anabaptist View	**Presbyterian View**	**Hierarchical Episcopal View**
Friends (Voluntary Association)	Family (Connectional)	The Military (Hierarchy)
Baptist/Congregational	Presbyterian/Reformed	Episcopal/Roman Catholic
My Choice	God's Choice (Put here by God)	Another's Choice
Duty: Separate	Duty: Reform or Renew	Duty: Obey
Movement: Separatism	Movement: Puritan	Movement: Establishment

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) **GENERAL ASSEMBLY** *(National – Most inclusive governing body.)*	
Meetings:	Annually, rotating in six sections of the nation.
Membership:	Each presbytery sends at least one teaching elder and one ruling elder. One teaching elder and one ruling elder is sent for each additional 10,000 communicants or major fraction thereof.
Officers:	Moderator, elected annually; Stated Clerk, elected every four years
Confirmed Members:	1,019,003 (2025)
Teaching Elders:	17,250 PCUSA ministers (2025)
Governing Bodies:	164 presbyteries and 16 synods (2025)
Congregations:	8,304 (2025)
Functions Through:	Annual meeting plus General Assembly Council (GAC), Ministry Divisions, Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC), GA Nominating Committee (GANC), GA Committee on Representation (GACOR), GA Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC), and others (all of which have paid staff).
Responsibilities:	• To set priorities in mission for the whole church. • To provide essential program functions to fulfill mission. • To administer and serve all approved ministries. • To collect funds and supervise their use for their intended missional purposes. • To provide communication to/with the whole church. • To create synods and supervise their work. • To decide controversies and final adjudication in all judicial disputes and cases. • To warn against error in doctrine and immorality in practice. • To provide authoritative interpretations. • To establish ecumenical relations and to correspond with other churches. • To see that less inclusive governing bodies observe the Constitution. • To amend the *Book of Order* with concurrence by a simple majority of the presbyteries. • To amend *The Book of Confessions* or to enter into full organic union with another body with concurrence by a two-thirds majority of the presbyteries and a second concurring Assembly.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) SYNOD OF LIVING WATERS *(Multi-State Governing Body – Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky.)*	
Meetings:	Twice a year; fall and spring.
Membership:	Each presbytery sends at least one teaching elder and one ruling elder with additional commissioners according to presbytery size and an agreed-upon formula. Middle Tennessee sends three teaching elders and three ruling elders.
Officers:	Moderator, elected biennially at spring meeting; Stated Clerk.
Confirmed Members:	60,369 (2024)
Teaching Elders:	1,235 total teaching elders; 812 active teaching elders (2003)
Governing Bodies:	12 presbyteries (2024)
Congregations:	546 (2024)
Functions Through:	Semi-annual meetings of the Synod Assembly plus Synod Permanent Judicial Commission, Synod Nominating Committee, Synod Committee on Representation, and other service agencies.
Responsibilities:	• To set priorities in mission for its four-state region. • To coordinate with Assembly and presbyteries for all church work in its four-state region. • To administer and serve all approved ministries. • To provide communication to/with all its constituencies. • To create presbyteries and to consult with them in their mission and work. • To provide resources for presbyteries with less resources. • To collect funds and to supervise their use for their intended purposes. • To coordinate the work of presbyteries in relation to their teaching elders. • To serve in judicial matters in accordance with the constitution and to adjudicate cases arising within synod. • To warn against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within its religion. • To review the records of the constituent presbyteries to assure conformity to the constitution. • To superintend the work of all regional service agencies and educational institutions under its care. • To establish regional ecumenical relationships.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) MIDDLE TENNESSEE PRESBYTERY *(Regional Governing Body – from Dickson to Fairfield Glade and from Kentucky to Alabama.)*	
Meetings:	Quarterly: February, May, August, November
Membership:	All teaching elders working and living in area plus at least one ruling elder from each Session, with at least one ruling elder for each teaching elder on a church's staff, plus other ruling elders to bring parity between teaching elders and ruling elders.
Officers:	Moderator, elected annually; Stated Clerk, elected by term.
Confirmed Members:	14,605 (2024)
Teaching Elders:	157 ministers (2003)
Governing Bodies:	78 congregations (2024)
Functions Through:	Quarterly meetings plus Presbytery Council, Presbytery Committee on Ministry, Presbytery Nominations Committee, Presbytery Committee on Representation, Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission, and other divisions, committees and agencies.
Responsibilities:	• To set priorities in mission for its area.

	• To elect commissioners to General Assembly and Synod. • To provide encouragement, guidance, resources and coordination to its member churches in their ministries. • To provide pastoral care for its churches and teaching elders, visiting sessions and teaching elders often. • To organize new churches and to divide, dismiss or dissolve churches in consultation with their members. • To control the location of new and relocating churches. • To take oversight of churches without teaching elders. • To support and direct those who would be Candidates for the Ministry. • To ordain, install, dismiss, remove and discipline teaching elders. • To collect funds for mission and to see that they are spent for their intended purposes. • To create, support and supervise mission service agencies. • To serve in judicial matters arising within Presbytery. • To assume original jurisdiction of a church, when necessary. • To review all sessional minutes. • To approve appropriate congregational property alteration.

Presbyterian Polity: Questions & Answers

1. ***Who is the Head of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?***
   Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of His Church.

2. ***What are "the Great Ends of the Church?"***
   The Great Ends of the Church are:
   the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
   the shelter, nurture and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
   the maintenance of divine worship;
   the preservation of the truth;
   the promotion of social righteousness; and
   the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

3. ***Is a church officer's first loyalty to the people who elected him/her?***
   No, it is first to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

4. ***What are the three basic forms of church government and list two denominations which use each form.***
   They are the Episcopal, the Congregational and the Presbyterian forms of government. EPISCOPAL: Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church. CONGREGATIONAL: Church of Christ, Baptist Church. PRESBYTERIAN: Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church.

5. ***Illustrate each of these three basic forms of government in the civic realm.***
   Episcopal – a monarchy or an oligarchy
   Congregational – New England town meeting or Greek city-state
   Presbyterian – United States of America (a republic)

6. ***What forms the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?***
   The constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) includes *The Book of Confessions* with its eleven confessional documents and the *Book of Order* with its four parts: Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Form of Government, Directory for Worship, and Rules of Discipline.

7. ***Presbyterian Church government is organized in a series of graded governing bodies. Name them in order.***
   Session, Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly.

8. ***What are the titles of the three ordained offices in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?***
   Teaching elders (ministers of Word and Sacrament) and ruling elders (both of whom are also known as "presbyters"), and deacons.

9. ***Compare the qualifications for these three offices.***
   Generally, the qualifications for all three are similar and very high. Candidates for any and all of these offices should be sound in the faith, blameless in life, spiritual in character and an example of Christian conduct. The particular emphasis laid down for the teaching elder is a competency of human learning as well as theological training; for the ruling elder, wisdom and discretion and an aptness to teach; for the deacon, warm sympathies and a concern for those in need.

10. ***What are the powers reserved for the congregation?***
    The congregation has the right to elect its own teaching elder(s), ruling elders and deacons and to be consulted concerning matters of special importance affecting the property of the church.

11. ***Name and define the kind of power church officers exercise.***
    Church officers, not as individuals but as they sit in governing bodies, exercise joint power which is entirely ecclesiastical in nature, never civil.

12. ***What is the proper title now given to anyone who presides over any section of the Presbyterian government: a task force, a sub-committee, a committee, a commission, a board, or a governing body?***
    Moderator.

13. ***What is the difference in Presbyterian polity between a committee and a commission?***
    A committee functions for and reports back to its appointing body with suggestions called recommendations; a commission is authorized to act for its appointed body and reports back its actions as accomplished facts.

14. ***How is a local congregation, called a particular church, related to the total Presbyterian body?***
    The session, which rules the particular church, under the Presbyterian constitution, elects commissioners to the next higher governing body, the presbytery.

15. ***What are the essential three parts of a "call" to service to God as a church officer?***
    1) The inward testimony of a good conscience on the part of the person;
    2) the manifest approbation of God's people on the part of the church; and
    3) the concurring judgment of a lawful governing body of the church.

16. ***Should there be a difference of opinion between the session and the board of deacons (diaconate), who in Presbyterian order has the right to overrule whom?***
    Although deacons and ruling elders equally are called by God based upon the same general spiritual qualifications, in the Presbyterian system the session rules all aspects of the particular church (in conformity to the constitution), including the board of deacons.

17. ***What is one's duty if he/she should find themself totally out of accord with an action of the governing body of which they are a part?***
    When a matter is determined (constitutionally) by a majority vote, every member shall either actively concur with or passively submit to such determination. If after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, their conscience permits them to do neither, they shall peaceably withdraw from our communion without attempting to make any schism.

18. ***Ordination, we are told, is for life, but active service comes in limited terms. Explain what is expected of the "reserve" ruling elder or deacon.***
    Reserve ruling elders and deacons are expected to continue throughout their lives in their respective ministries and callings, as they are able, though only during their active terms shall they participate in the governance of the session or the decision-making of the diaconate. Otherwise, there are many particular aspects of their calling which they can accomplish as alert and continuing officers of the church.

19. ***Who is constitutionally charged with the responsibility of building the annual church budget? What part must the congregation play?***
The session shall build the budget, though wise sessions find ways to incorporate the thinking of the deacons and of the congregation-at-large in some manner prior to the session's formal adoption of the church budget. Any and all changes in compensation to any teaching elder must gain the approval of the congregation and presbytery.

20. ***How should Presbyterians respond to the pronouncements of higher governing bodies?***
With interest and appreciation, with seriousness and a willingness to test all such by the Scripture, the Confessions and human conscience, ever remembering that such bodies do not speak for God, nor for all Presbyterians, nor for the Presbyterian Church, except as it is representatively gathered. We must take such statements seriously, fully aware that such are but the majority opinion of that group of presbyters gathered at that moment in time. We are fully aware that all church governing bodies err; we are always aware that we err. We must hear and take heed to the valid aspects of their spiritual wisdom, keeping their statements in perspective.

Deacons: Questions & Answers

1. ***Where do we find a biblical basis for establishing the office of deacon?***
When the Church was just beginning its new life (after Pentecost in Jerusalem), the office was begun in the selection of the seven to take care of certain duties so as to free the apostles for their preaching of the Word. (See Acts 6:1-6)

2. ***Is there other evidence that there were deacons in the Early Church?***
The word itself appears in a number of places and specific instructions about the qualifications for deacons are given in 1 Timothy, Titus and 1 Peter.

3. ***What is the underlying idea in the role of the deacon?***
The word itself (from a Greek word, *diakoneo*) carries the idea of service. The role of servant is a noble one, since our Lord Himself gives us the supreme example of One Who came to serve.

4. ***How is the idea expressed in the description of the deacon in the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?***
G-2.0201 says: "The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress."

5. ***How does the Book of Order sum up the characteristics of a deacon?***
G-2.0201 goes on to say: "Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry."

6. ***How is a group of deacons to be organized in a local church?***
The deacons as elected by the congregation are organized into a board, and the board has its own moderator, selected from among its members. A secretary keeps the records of the board's proceedings.

7. ***What is the relationship of the board of deacons (diaconate) to the session?***
As in all Presbyterian churches, the entire life of the church is the responsibility of and under the jurisdiction of the session. The board of deacons is therefore under the session's authority, which relationship is exercised in a formal sense by the session's review of the minutes of the board's meetings. In our own church, a closeness between the two groups is fostered by the fact that almost all of our regular meetings include a joint meeting of both the session and the diaconate (for supper, fellowship and certain presentations).
8. ***How may deacons best fulfill the high privilege and responsibility of this office?***
They can first of all seek to grow in their own spiritual walk so as to be the kind of disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ described in the scriptural passages as the ideal deacon. They can encourage others, by word and example, to join them in that kind of growth. They can be faithful in their attendance and participation in

meetings and activities, which are a part of their deacon's role and seek other avenues of living out their call to service, as these become available to them.

9. What are some practical means a deacon can use to help personal spiritual growth?
The "means of grace" are available to us for this goal, most especially the Word, the sacraments and prayer.

A First Look at the Session

by Joan S. Gray and Joyce C. Tucker

An Overview of Responsibilities and Powers

An outline of the responsibilities of the session might enable elders to grasp the scope of their duties and to think creatively about their own life and the ministry to which they have been called, elected, and ordained. It is suggested that readers who serve on sessions work through the outline with care....

Responsibilities and Powers of the Session for the Mission and Government of the Particular Church

I. Reception and categories of members
   A. Three ways of receiving members
   B. Four categories of membership
   C. Preparation for membership
   D. Accurate membership rolls

II. Leadership of the congregation in reaching out
   A. In participation in mission of the whole church in the world
   B. In ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation within the particular community
   C. In discovering God's activity in the world and in planning for change, renewal, and reformation under God's Word

III. Ordering the life of the particular church
   A. Providing for the worship of God's people
      1. Preaching
      2. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper
      3. The music program
   B. Developing and supervising the educational program
   C. Challenging the people with the privilege of responsible stewardship of money, time, and talents
   D. Establishing the annual budget and determining the distribution to benevolences
   E. Instructing, examining, ordaining, installing, and welcoming ruling elders and deacons, as well as delegating and supervising the work of deacons, trustees, and all other church organizations
   F. Providing for the administration of the church's program including employment (with concern for EEO) and compensation of staff
   G. Assigning the management of the church's property to the diaconate

IV. A continuing responsibility for members, their growth, and their ministry
   A. Personal and pastoral care
   B. Educational programs including church school
   C. Sharing in fellowship
   D. Sharing in mutual support
   E. Opportunities for witness and service in the world
   F. Correcting patterns of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age and disability

G. Supporting candidates for ministry of the Word and other professional service from among the church's membership
H. Reviewing with members their fulfillment of membership responsibilities
I. Encouraging members who have moved away from the area to establish membership elsewhere
J. Moving persons to the inactive roll
K. Deleting persons from all rolls

V. A continuing responsibility for church officers
A. Inquiring into the faithfulness of ruling elders and deacons in fulfilling their responsibilities
B. Engaging in a process for education and mutual growth of session members

VI. Beyond the congregation – relationships with other governing bodies, the community, and the ecumenical church
A. Electing or nominating persons to serve as members of presbytery, synod, and General Assembly in such a way as to implement principles of inclusiveness
B. Observing and carrying out any constitutional instructions from higher governing bodies
C. Welcoming representatives of presbytery
D. Proposing overtures through presbytery to the synod or General Assembly
E. Establishing and maintaining local ecumenical relationships necessary for the church's life and mission

VII. Serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline

VIII. Calling meetings of the congregation

Spiritual Gifts

How to Identify Your Spiritual Gift-abilities

by Herb Miller

In a survey of several thousand Christians, less than 25 percent felt they were making a contribution to the Christian cause in the world. Less than 10 percent could identify the "spiritual gift" they possessed. Less than 5 percent were actively engaged in a ministry for which they felt a special calling or gift.

Church leaders therefore increasingly want to provide each church member with a means of identifying his or her spiritual gifts. To achieve maximum practicality, such an instrument needs three guidelines: (1) easy to understand and use; (2) appropriate for new members, many of whom have no previous church experiences, and (3) short enough to administer during an adult Sunday school class or a new member orientation. Below explains is such inventory.

The Gift-abilities Inventory

We will have the opportunity to identify our personal spiritual gift-abilities. Before we begin that process, let's be sure we understand the meaning of the term – spiritual gift. What is a spiritual gift?

- The Bible says that spiritual gifts are the special abilities God gives individual Christians. According to Ephesians 4:12, spiritual gifts are given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

- The Apostle Paul lists many of these spiritual gifts in New Testament letters. For example, we read in Romans 12:6-8, "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence, the compassionate, in cheerfulness."

- Paul does not, however, list all of the spiritual gifts. We can produce a list of at least thirty from all parts of the Bible. Some researchers come up with a list of thirty-two – some even more than that.

- We should also take care not to confuse spiritual gifts with offices and roles in the church – such as teaching elder, ruling elder, deacon and bishop. A spiritual gift is not a job, but an indication of the kind of service in which you would probably be effective and feel comfortable doing.

- As you answer the questions that will identify your gifts, please remember that we are not going to cover all the spiritual gifts. For instance, we will not cover the gift of "speaking in tongues." If you have that gift, you already know about it. We will not cover the gift of martyrdom. That's the gift you can only use once. If you have it, you would probably prefer not to know about it yet. We will not cover the gift of exorcism. We will not cover the gift of voluntary poverty, which some researchers feel is listed in the New Testament. We will not cover the gift of celibacy. Nobody seems eager to receive that one these days – and if you have it, you already know that.

- Answer the identification statements as honestly as possible. There is no way to fail this exercise.

- Remember that this is not a test – it is an inventory. All of us here will have different scores because we have different giftabilities.

- Don't ponder any of the identification statements very long. Your first thought is usually the truest measure.

- Don't be too concerned about the answer to any one question. Your results are not determined by the answer to any one statement, but rather by all the statements averaged together.

- Be as honest as you can, so you can get the greatest possible personal benefit from this experience.

This profile is not the only way to find out about your spiritual gifts. You can learn about them in at least two other ways.

1. Personal experience. If you enjoy doing something in the church, you are probably good at it. If you bitterly detest doing something, you may not be gifted for that role. Square pegs can occupy round holes but not with comfort.

2. Experiment. Try it. You may not like a particular role. But then again, you might. Let your light shine. See if it lights up any hidden dark corners.

Why Use This Inventory?

Churches that use this inventory report several benefits, among which the following are especially obvious.

1. Involves new members in faster and better ways.

2. Increases self-esteem and involvement of members with low self-confidence.

3. Reduces burnout and guilt feelings among high-involvement members who seem to operate as if they feel they have all the spiritual gifts.

Using such an instrument does not totally eliminate the confusion surrounding the topic of spiritual gifts. (But people who have the opportunity to use it are confused on a much higher plane than before.)

One Hundred Questions that Reveal My Spiritual Gift-abilities

INSTRUCTIONS: To obtain your spiritual Gift-ability scores, answer these one hundred questions and write the answers in the appropriate column (A, B, C, D) on the chart entitled, "My Spiritual Gift-ability Profile" (found on the page following the questions). Score yourself 0 if you do not experience the statement in your own life. Score yourself as high as 5 if the statement represents a high degree of intensity or frequency in your personal experience. If it is a lower degree of intensity or frequency, score yourself with a 1, 2, 3 or 4, accordingly.

COLUMN A

1. God frequently gives me a clear picture of what will happen in the future.
2. I try to keep rooms tidy and comfortable by properly arranging tables, chairs, etc.
3. I often carry out special assignments for other people.
4. When I teach, people seem to enjoy learning.
5. I can persuade others toward self-improvement even if they are a first reluctant.
6. I give significant amounts of money to special causes.
7. People seek my advice and follow my suggestions.
8. I often think of ways to help people in physical distress or bereavement.
9. People under my influence grow spiritually.
10. I have been elected or appointed to serve the church on district or general levels.
11. I can readily adjust to the "differentness" in other cultures without making negative judgments.
12. I can explain clearly to non-Christians the biblical meaning of salvation.
13. I can usually select a course of action that benefits the other people in my group.
14. I can easily remember ideas and facts.

15. The people I vote for in organizations usually make good officers.
16. I have prayed for the physical healing of another person, and healing has resulted.
17. In the name of the Lord, I have done the otherwise impossible.
18. Because of my faith in God's power, I can overcome challenging problems in ways that seem to defy the laws of reason.
19. I can easily see when and how to delegate important responsibilities and to whom I should delegate them.
20. I can provide food and/or lodging in a manner that guests appreciate.
21. I have played one or more musical instruments in public performances.
22. I have utilized my vocal-music ability in public performances.
23. I have used my writing ability in businesses, churches or other organizations.
24. I have employed my artistic ability in businesses, churches or other organizations.
25. I have the ability to design, construct or repair buildings, equipment or property.

COLUMN B

1. I find satisfaction in telling a group what I feel is God's will.
2. I enjoy helping others feel comfortable at meetings and events.
3. I like to run errands for other people.
4. I enjoy learning and teaching new ideas and facts.
5. I enjoy encouraging other people to put forth their best efforts.
6. I like to give significant financial gifts that help worthy organizations accomplish what they could not otherwise do.
7. I enjoy seeing others follow my guidance.
8. I enjoy doing little things for people who are unable to take care of themselves.
9. I enjoy helping people grow spiritually.
10. I feel comfortable taking responsibility for the spiritual growth of large numbers of people in various communities.
11. I feel at ease when relating to people from other cultures.
12. I enjoy seeking out unbelievers in order to witness to them regarding my faith in Christ.
13. I enjoy seeking and applying ideas that help solve specific problems.
14. I enjoy collecting, analyzing and utilizing complex information to improve the effectiveness of organizations.
15. I can easily see the hidden reasons behind the statements and actions of other people.
16. I enjoy praying for the healing of sick persons.
17. I feel that spiritual forces can alter the laws of nature.
18. I find it easy to trust in god in difficult circumstances, and that faith is usually rewarded.
19. I have a knack for organizing ideas, people and resources to effectively achieve goals.
20. I enjoy making strangers and/or persons in need feel at home.
21. I enjoy playing one or more musical instruments in public performances.
22. I like to use my vocal-music ability in public performances.
23. I find projects that require writing skill enjoyable.
24. I derive satisfaction from projects that require skill in art.
25. I enjoy projects that require designing, constructing or repairing buildings, equipment or property.

COLUMN C

1. When I tell people what I feel is God's will, they seem willing to follow.
2. People thank me for my careful attention to details.
3. People appreciate the skill I use in helping them achieve their goals.
4. People seem to like my style of giving them information, ideas and insights.
5. People tell me that I have been a big help when they were depressed, lonely or trying to make a big decision.
6. Christian colleges, churches or charities appreciate the large sums I am able to contribute.
7. People in organizations and groups appreciate my opinions and often follow my suggestions.
8. Persons with special needs, such as the elderly or handicapped, appreciate my visits.
9. People express appreciation for the spiritual help they receive through friendship with me.
10. Local church leaders respond well to my guidance in matters such as theological beliefs and establishing new congregations.
11. People of other cultures trust and react pleasantly to me.
12. People respond to my witnessing conversations with them by deciding to become Christians or join the church.
13. People seem inclined to accept my advice and act upon it.
14. People appreciate my ability to analyze complex information and to apply it in simple, practical ways.
15. My friends often seem surprised at how easily I can analyze the motives behind the behaviors of others.
16. Friends seem amazed at my sense of confidence that my prayers will help sick or injured people recover.
17. People have told me that I have more faith in the possibility of miracles than they do.
18. People notice how much I seem to trust in God.
19. People comment about the effective and efficient ways I help an organization accomplish its goals.
20. People often want to stay in my home.
21. People compliment me on my ability to play a musical instrument.
22. People seem to like my singing.
23. Friends and other people seem impressed with my writing.
24. People seem to appreciate my ability in art.
25. People comment on my ability to design, construct or repair things.

COLUMN D

1. In group situations, people ask me to give my opinion regarding God's will.
2. People ask me to take responsibility for matters that require careful attention to details.
3. People in authority often ask me to help them prepare for special meetings or projects.
4. People invite me to fill roles that require teaching skills.
5. People seek my advice when they are depressed or facing a tough decision.
6. Leaders of various charitable organizations often bring special financial needs to my attention, knowing that I can draw upon reserve funds to meet those needs.
7. Groups elect or appoint me to leadership positions involving decision making.
8. Because they sense that I will know what kind of help we should extend, people often tell me of another's misfortune.
9. People often seek my counsel in personal spiritual matters.
10. People seek my opinions regarding biblical, denomination and local church traditions.
11. People ask me to help with projects involving persons of other nationalities.

12. Church leaders invite me to help with evangelistic reach-out activities.
13. People ask for my help in deciding moral, ethical and other life issues.
14. Because I often bring fresh insights to complex issues, people ask me to help them find solutions.
15. People in authority ask my opinion about giving certain jobs to certain people.
16. Because God often answers my prayers for healing in a way visible to others, sick people ask me to pray for them.
17. People often ask me to assume difficult tasks because they know that the miracles I believe will happen often do.
18. When people work with me on challenging

projects, they seem to gain confidence from my faith in God's providence.

19. People seem to appreciate my organizational abilities.
20. Because I enjoy entertaining guests, organizations in which I participate invite me to provide hospitality skills.
21. I am employed or have been employed in using my instrumental-music talent professionally.
22. I am employed or have been employed in using my vocal-music talent professionally.
23. I am employed or have been employed in using my writing skills professionally.
24. I am employed or have been employed in using my art ability professionally.
25. I am employed or have been employed in using my design, building or repair craftsmanship professionally.

My Spiritual Gift-ability Profile

INSTRUCTIONS: Write answers here from the "One Hundred Questions That Reveal My Spiritual Gift-abilities." Score yourself 0 if you do not experience the statement in your own life. Score yourself as high as 5 if the statement represents a high degree of intensity or frequency in your personal experience. If it is a lower degree of intensity or frequency, score yourself with a 1, 2, 3 or 4, accordingly. After completing the first 25 answers (Column A), cover those and subsequent answers with a sheet of paper to avoid distorting your other answers.

A	B	C	D	TOTAL SCORE	RANK	SPIRITUAL GIFTS
						1.
						2.
						3.
						4.
						5.
						6.
						7.
						8.
						9.
						10.
						11.
						12.
						13.

						14.
						15.
						16.
						17.
						18.
						19.
						20.
						21.
						22.
						23.
						24.
						25.

Warning: Do not review this list until you have answered the "One Hundred Questions That Reveal My Spiritual Giftabilities" and written the numerical scores on "My Spiritual Gift-ability Profile."

After you have answered the one hundred questions, take the first 25 words from the "Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible" below and write them in order in the 25 blanks on the "My Spiritual Gift-ability Profile" chart.

Take the 7 highest total scores and rank them 1 through 7 in the column titled "Rank." This gives you a list of your seven highest-ranking spiritual gifts. (Some of your top 7 may be ties.)

Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible

The basic New Testament texts regarding spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-27; 1 Corinthians 14:1-5; Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16; and 1 Peter 4:8-11. These and other gifts are illustrated in numerous other texts throughout the Bible.

1. Prophecy: The Gift-ability to receive and communicate a message from God to a particular audience with clarity and persuasive power. (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Ephesians 4:11-14; Luke 7:26; Acts 15:32; Acts 21:9-11)

2. Serving: The Gift-ability to identify and perform various details of work essential to the efficient functioning of the church. (Romans 12:7; 2 Timothy 1:16-18; Titus 3:14; Galatians 6:10; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

3. Helping: The Gift-ability to help other Christians increase the effectiveness of their particular spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 16:1-2; Acts 9:36; Luke 8:2-3; Mark 15:40-41)

4. Teaching: The Gift-ability to communicate Christian information or concepts in ways that allow people to learn quickly and easily. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-14; Romans 12:7; Acts 18:24-28; Acts 20:20-21)

5. Encouraging: The Gift-ability to exhort, counsel, comfort, console and encourage others in ways that strengthen their Christian faith commitment. (Romans 12:8; Hebrews 10:25; Acts 14:22)

6. Giving: The Gift-ability to earn and give material resources to God's work liberally and cheerfully. (Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 9:2-8)

7. Leadership: The Gift-ability to help Christians set goals congruent with God's will and to communicate these goals in ways that cause others to work voluntarily and harmoniously toward their achievement. (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17)

8. Mercy: The Gift-ability to feel empathy and compassion for those who suffer from mental, emotional or physical hurts and to help them in ways that alleviate their suffering. (Romans 12:8; Mark 9:41; Luke 10:33-35; Acts 11:28-30)

9. Pastor: The Gift-ability to assume long-term responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a Christian group. (Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3)

10. Apostle: The Gift-ability to give leadership to a group of churches with a kind of spiritual authority that is spontaneously recognized by other people. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-14; Galatians 2:7-10)

11. Missionary: The Gift-ability to minister effectively to persons in another culture. (Acts 13:2-3; Acts 22:20-21; Romans 15:18-19)

12. Evangelist: The Gift-ability to share the gospel of Christ with unbelievers in ways that encourage them to become active disciples and responsible members of his church. (Ephesians 4:11-14; 2 Timothy 4:5; Acts 8:5-6, 26-40; Acts 21:8)

13. Wisdom: The Gift-ability to see how a given item of knowledge applies to specific problem situations in the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 1 Corinthians 12:8; 2 Peter 3:15)

14. Knowledge: The Gift-ability to find, collect, analyze and clarify knowledge and then appropriately apply that information to problem situations in ways that promote the growth and well-being of the church. (1 Corinthians 12:8; 2 Corinthians 11:6)

15. Discernment of Spirits: The Gift-ability to accurately judge character, recognize whether a person's behavior arises from godly or from evil motives, and see the difference between false teaching and divine truth in a confusing situation. (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-6)

16. Healing: The Gift-ability to serve as the human instrument through whom God's healing power cures another person's physical or emotional need in ways different from those considered medically natural. (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28; Acts 3:1-10; Acts 5:12-16; Acts 9:32-35; Acts 28:7-10)

17. Miracles: The Gift-ability to exercise faith in ways that observers perceive as altering the normal course of nature. (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Acts 9:36-42; Acts 19:11-20; Acts 20:7-12; 2 Corinthians 12:12)

18. Faith: The Gift-ability to clearly see the will and purpose of God and confidently act accordingly. (1 Corinthians 12:9; Acts 11:22-24; Acts 27:21-25)

19. Administration: The Gift-ability to clearly understand the goals of a particular part of Christ's Body and to effectively execute designed plans for the accomplishment of these goals. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 6:1-7)

20. Hospitality: The Gift-ability to enjoy providing a warm welcome to those who need food and lodging. (1 Peter 4:9; Romans 12:13; Romans 16:23; Acts 16:14-15; Hebrews 13:1-2)

21. Instrumental Music: The Gift-ability to play a musical instrument in ways that spiritually encourage and strengthen others. (1 Samuel 16:14-33)

22. Vocal Music: The Gift-ability to spiritually strengthen people through singing. (Psalm 96:1-4)

23. Writing: The Gift-ability to spiritually edify, instruct and strengthen people with written words. (1 John 2:1-28)

24. Artistry: The Gift-ability to create, design and build things that inspire others to greater faith and spiritual growth. (Exodus 31:1-11)

25. Craftsmanship: The Gift-ability to construct or repair buildings and/or other items used to achieve God's purposes. (Exodus 31:3-5)

26. Tongues: The Gift-ability to speak to God in an unknown language and/or to receive a message from God to his people through this medium. (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 1 Corinthians 14:13-19; Acts 10:44-46; Acts 19:1-6; Mark 16:17)

27. Interpretation: The Gift-ability to translate the message of someone who speaks in unknown tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 1 Corinthians 14:13; 1 Corinthians 14:26-28)

28. Intercession: The Gift-ability to regularly pray for extended time periods and frequently use these prayers answered to a degree much greater than that found among most Christians. (James 5:14-16; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Colossians 1:9-12)

29. Celibacy: The Gift-ability to enjoy remaining unmarried without suffering undue sexual temptation. (1 Corinthians 7:7-8; Matthew 19:10-12)

30. Martyrdom: The Gift-ability to undergo suffering for the faith to the point of death with a joyous and positive attitude. (Acts 7:54-60; Acts 12:1-5; 2 Corinthians 11:22-28

Assortment of Possible Spiritual Gifts

1. **Prophesy** – Adult education, communications, missions
2. **Serving/Helping** – childcare, education, general office, hunger, kitchen, food, homeless, older adults, pastoral care, youth, children choir, ushering
3. **Teaching** – education, mentoring, prisons, VBS
4. **Encouraging** – mentor, homeless, older adults, pastoral care, prison, youth
5. **Giving** – stewardship, finance
6. **Leadership** – mentoring, prisons, recreation, working hands, youth, education, small groups
7. **Mercy** – childcare, hunger, mentoring, homeless, older adults, pastoral care, prison, working hands, rides to church
8. **Pastor/Shepherd** – education, pastoral care, prison, small groups, youth
9. **Missionary** – education, hunger, mentoring, homeless, older adults, prison, small groups, working hands
10. **Evangelist** – education, homeless, older adults, prison, VBS
11. **Wisdom** – pastoral care, small groups
12. **Knowledge** – pastoral care, small groups
13. **Discernment** – education, mentoring, pastoral care, small groups
14. **Healing** – pastoral care
15. **Miracles** – pastoral care
16. **Faith** – older adults, pastoral care, prison, education
17. **Administration** – general office, new members, older adults, pastoral care, other VBS, library assistant, retreat planning

Officer Examination

How to Prepare for Officer Examination:

- Bathe your preparation time in prayer.
- Recommit yourself to the Lord.
- Review the constitution: *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.
- Come to the examination with confidence, confidence in the Lord.

What to Expect:

- Groups of officers-elect plus ruling elders and one teaching elder or "lead elder" (who will examine the officers-elect).
- **Friendly faces and supportive fellow officers praying for you.**
- Possible questions:
  - Relating to your personal Christian experience
  - On doctrine/the sacraments
  - On polity/government
  - On discipline
  - Relating to the duties of the office to which you have been called

PURPOSE: ***Not to fail or to embarrass you, but to give you an opportunity to share what you have learned in a positive, affirming setting with your fellow new officers.***

QUESTION & ANSWERS

1. **What are spiritual gifts?**
   Gifts are the special abilities God gives individual Christians.

2. **Why are spiritual gifts given?**
   "To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

3. **What is the rank of spiritual authority?**
   Christ
   Bible
   Governing bodies
   Private understanding and personal experience

4. **Who is eligible for church offices?**
   Both men and women who are called and live a life in obedience to Scripture.

5. **What is meant by "via media"?**
   The middle way. A way between a church of a system of hierarchy and one of emotionalism. A church with a representative form of government.

6. **What has been our greatest problem with our inclusiveness?**
   Splits within the church, i.e. the PCA.

7. **Name three people who helped form Presbyterian ideas.**
   - Luther – Justification by grace through faith
   - Zwingli – The true body of Christ is present through faith
   - Calvin – Systematic theology
   - Wyclif – English Bible translation
   - Knox – Priesthood of all believers, republican church government

8. **What is meant by "the church reformed, always reforming"?**
   It means that Presbyterians are a studying and a thinking people, and as they grow in their understanding they may view Scripture in a different light.

9. **Who is the head of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?**
   Christ is the Head of the Church.

10. **Name at least three Great Ends of the Church.**
    - the Proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind,
    - the shelter nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God,
    - the maintenance of divine worship,
    - the preservation of the truth,
    - the promotion of social righteousness,
    - the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

11. **What are the three basic forms of church government?**
    Episcopal, Congregational, and Presbyterian

12. **Name two denominations which use each.**
    - Episcopal – Roman Catholic Church and Methodist Church
    - Congregational – Church of Christ and Baptist Church
    - Presbyterian – Reformed Church and Presbyterian Church

13. **What are the three forms of civic government represented by each?**
    - Episcopal – A monarchy or oligarchy
    - Congregational – New England town meeting or Greek city-state
    - Presbyterian – A republic, i.e. the United States of America

14. **The governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church are:**
    Session, Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly

15. ***The Book of Confessions* is made up of how many sections?**
    Twelve

16. **Name four.**
    - The Nicene Creed
    - The Apostle's Creed
    - The Scots Confession
    - The Heidelberg Catechism
    - The Second Helvetic Confession
    - The Westminster Confession of Faith
    - The Shorter Catechism
    - The Larger Catechism
    - The Theological Declaration of Barmen
    - The Confession of 1967
    - The Confession of Belhar
    - A Brief Statement of Faith

17. **The *Book of Order* is made up of four sections, they are:**
    The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Form of Government, Directory for Worship, and Rules of Discipline.

18. **What is meant by "unconditional election"?**
    "God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation."

19. **Explain, in your own words, the Presbyterian view of baptism.**
    - Presbyterians accept the baptism of all Christians who were baptized with water "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."
    - Baptism is not repeatable, it need be done only once.
    - Baptism can be administered to adults and children.
    - For children, parents take their vows and promise to train them in the faith.
    - When the age of understanding is reached, the child must be confirmed in that personal faith, making it their own.
    - It is not an assurance of salvation since salvation is God's gift through grace with our profession of faith.

(OTHER QUESTIONS AS THE EXAMINERS MAY DEEM PROPER)