

**SESSION AND THE DIRECTORY OF WORSHIP**  
**Presbytery of Detroit Clerk Training**  
**January 26, 2013**

**W-1.0000      CHAPTER I. THE DYNAMICS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**

W-1.4004      Session

In a particular church, the session is to provide for worship and shall encourage the people to participate fully and regularly in it. The session shall make provision for the regular

- a. preaching of the Word,
- b. celebration of the Sacraments,
- c. corporate prayer, and
- d. offering of praise to God in song. (W-2.0000; W-3.0000)

The session has authority

- e. to oversee and approve all public worship in the life of the particular church with the exception of those responsibilities delegated to the pastor alone (W-1.4005),
- f. to determine occasions, days, times, and places for worship.

It is responsible

- g. for the space where worship is conducted, including its arrangement and furnishings,
  - h. for the use of special appointments such as flowers, candles, banners, paraments, and other objects of art,
  - i. for the overall program of music and other arts in the church,
  - j. for those who lead worship through music, drama, dance, and other arts. (G-3.0201 a,b)
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W-1.4005      Pastor

W-1.4005a.      Responsibilities

**The teaching elder † as pastor has certain responsibilities which are not subject to the authority of the session.** In a particular service of worship the pastor is responsible for

- (1) the selection of Scripture lessons to be read,
- (2) the preparation and preaching of the sermon or exposition of the Word,
- (3) the prayers offered on behalf of the people and those prepared for the use of the people in worship,
- (4) the music to be sung,
- (5) the use of drama, dance and other art forms

The pastor may confer with a worship committee in planning particular services of worship. (G-2.0504)

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W-1.4005b.      Pastor and Choir Director

Where there is a choir director or other musical leader, the pastor and that person will confer to ensure that anthems and other musical offerings are appropriate for the particular service. The session should see that these conferences take place appropriately and on a regular basis.

W-1.4006      Session and Pastor

The sequence and proportion of the elements of worship are the responsibility of the pastor with the concurrence of session. The selection of hymnals, song books, service books, Bibles, and other materials for use of the congregation in public worship is the responsibility of the session with the concurrence of the pastor and in consultation with musicians and educators available to the session.

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W-1.4007      Session Responsibility for Education

In the exercise of its responsibility to encourage the participation of its people in worship, the session should provide for education in Christian worship by means appropriate to the age, interests, and circumstances of the members of the congregation. (W-3.5202; W-6.2000; G-3.0201 a, b) It shall also provide for the regular study of this directory in the education of ruling elders and deacons. (G-3.0201c)

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**W-2.0000      CHAPTER II. THE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**

W-2.2001      Centrality of Scripture

The church confesses the Scriptures to be the Word of God written, witnessing to God's self-revelation. Where that Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the Living Word is present by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. For this reason the reading, hearing, preaching, and confessing of the Word are central to Christian worship. The session shall ensure that in public worship the Scripture is read and proclaimed regularly in the common language(s) of the particular church.

W-2.3000 3. Baptism

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W-2.3011 Responsibility for Baptism

W-2.3011a. By a Teaching Elder, or Ruling Elder Commissioned to Pastoral Service

For reasons of order, Baptism shall be authorized by the session, administered by a teaching elder, or ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service when invited by the session and authorized by the presbytery, and accompanied by the reading and proclaiming of the Word. (G-3.0301; W-3.3602-3608) Baptism is celebrated in a service of public worship. Extraordinary circumstances may call for the administration of Baptism apart from the worship of the whole congregation. In such cases care should be taken that

W.2.3011a.(1) the congregation be represented by one or more members of the session;

W.2.3011a.(2) a proper understanding of the meaning of the Sacrament be offered by the teaching elder;

W.2.3011a.(3) the session be consulted when possible;

W.2.3011a.(4) the Baptism be reported by the officiating teaching elder † and recorded by the session.

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W-2.3011b. By Chaplains and Others

A council may also authorize the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism by chaplains or others engaged in ordered ministries serving in hospitals, prisons, schools, or other institutions where the council has an authorized ministry or an institutional witness, by chaplains ministering to members of the armed forces and their families, and by teaching elders † engaged in new church development under the jurisdiction of the council. In all such cases of Baptism, the teaching elder † shall take responsibility that the newly baptized person is enrolled as a member of a particular church. Such enrollment may be arranged in advance in consultation with the session of the church, or the council may provide that any such newly baptized member shall be enrolled in absentia as a member of a particular church designated by the council and under its jurisdiction or upon the roll held by the council until a new church is organized.

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W-2.3012 Session Responsibility

The session's responsibilities for Baptism are

W-2.3012a. encouraging parents to present their children for Baptism, reminding them that children of believers are to be baptized without undue haste, but without undue delay, and authorizing the Baptism of those presented; (W-2.3014)

W-2.3012b. admitting to Baptism children of believers, after appropriate instruction and discussion with the parent(s) or one(s) rightly exercising parental responsibility, acquainting them with the significance of what God is doing in this act, and with the special responsibilities on parents and congregations for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life;

W-2.3012c. admitting to Baptism, after appropriate instruction and examination, those not yet baptized who come making public their personal profession of faith;

W-2.3012d. placing all baptized persons on the appropriate roll as members of the congregation;

W-2.3012e. making certain that those baptized are nurtured in understanding the meaning of Baptism, of the Lord's Supper, and of their interrelation, and that they are surrounded by Christian encouragement and support. (G-3.0201; G-3.0204; W-2.3011)

W-2.3013 Church Responsibility

The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life. In exercising this ministry, the session may designate certain members of the congregation as representatives of the church charged with special responsibility for nurture. For any person who is being baptized, sponsor(s) may be appointed by the session in consultation with those desiring Baptism for themselves or for their children and given the specific role of nurturing the baptized person. (W-6.2001; W-6.2005)

W-2.3014 Parental Responsibility

When a child is being presented for Baptism, ordinarily the parent(s) or one(s) rightly exercising parental responsibility shall be an active member of the congregation. Those presenting children for Baptism shall promise to provide nurture and guidance within the community of faith until the child is ready to make a personal profession of faith and assume the responsibility of active church membership. (W-4.2002; W-4.2003) The session may also consider a request for the baptism of a child from a Christian parent who is an active member of another congregation. If the session approves such a request, it shall consult with the council of the other congregation and shall notify them when the Sacrament has been administered.

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W-2.4000 4. The Lord's Supper

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W-2.4010 Special Occasions

It is also appropriate to observe the Lord's Supper on other occasions of special significance in the life of the Christian community, as long as the celebration of the Sacrament is open to the whole believing community. The Lord's Supper may be observed in connection with the visitation of the sick and those isolated from public worship as a means of extending the church's

ministry to them. On all such occasions of the celebration of the Sacrament, the Word shall be read and proclaimed. Even though such a celebration may involve only a few members of the congregation, nevertheless it is not to be understood as a private ceremony or devotional exercise, but as an act of the whole church, which shall be represented not only by the teaching elder or the one authorized by presbytery to administer the sacrament, but also by one or more members of the congregation authorized by the session to represent the church. (W-2.4012; W-3.3609-.3618; W-3.6204)

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W-2.4012            Responsibility  
W-2.4012a.        Session

The session is responsible for authorizing all observances of the Lord's Supper in the life of a particular church and shall ensure regular and frequent celebration of the Sacrament, in no case less than quarterly. Any other council of the church, also, may appoint times for the celebration of the Lord's Supper during their meetings. A council may also authorize the celebration of the Sacrament in connection with the public worship of some gathering of believers which is under its jurisdiction or in institutions where it has a missional witness or authorized ministry. A council may delegate the authority to approve the celebration of the Lord's Supper to an appropriate overseeing body in the institutions for which it has responsibility. (Cf. W-3.6205)

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W-2.4012c.        Administered by Teaching Elder or Ruling Elder Commissioned to Pastoral Service  
For reasons of order the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered by a teaching elder or ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service when invited by the session and authorized by the presbytery. Missional concerns may lead to exceptions as determined and authorized by presbytery. (G-2.1001; G-3.0301)

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**W-3.0000            CHAPTER III. THE ORDERING OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**

W-3.1002b.        Guidance of Session  
Manifestations of the Spirit in worship edify the whole church. When actions in worship are present only for personal expression, call attention to themselves, or are insensitive to the congregation at worship, they are not in order and call for the counsel and guidance of the session.

W-3.1003            Participation and Leadership  
The ordering of worship should also reflect the richness of the cultural diversity in which the church ministers, as well as the local circumstances and needs of its congregations. While the authority for ordering worship belongs to those so designated (G-2.0504; G-3.0201; W-1.4000) and leadership in worship is assigned to those with gifts, training, and authorization (W-1.4003), the order for worship should provide for and encourage the participation of all.

W-3.1004            Children in Worship  
Children bring special gifts to worship and grow in the faith through their regular inclusion and participation in the worship of the congregation. Those responsible for planning and leading the participation of children in worship should consider the children's level of understanding and ability to respond, and should avoid both excessive formality and condescension. The session should ensure that regular programs of the church do not prevent children's full participation with the whole congregation in worship, in Word and Sacrament, on the Lord's Day. (W-3.3201; W-3.5202; W-6.2001; W-6.2006)

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W-3.3000            3. Service for the Lord's Day  
W-3.3100            a.        Appropriate Actions  
W-3.3101            What Is Included:

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Lord's Supper  
W-3.3101(5)        The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated regularly and frequently as determined by the session. (W-2.4000)

W-3.3200            b.        Ordering the Actions  
W-3.3201            Setting an Order for Worship  
In setting an order for worship on the Lord's Day, the pastor with the concurrence of the session shall provide opportunity for the people from youngest to oldest to participate in a worthy offering of praise to God and for them to hear and to respond to God's Word. (W-1.4004-.4007; W-3.1004)

W-3.3400            (2)       Proclaiming the Word  
W-3.3401            Proclaiming

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W-3.3401(d) The Word shall be interpreted in a sermon preached by the teaching elder † or in other forms authorized by the session and by the pastor. (W-1.4004-.4006; W-2.2007-.2008) This proclamation concludes with a prayer, acclamation, or ascription of praise. It is appropriate also to call the people to discipleship. (W-2.2007; W-2.2009)

W-3.3600 (4) The Sealing of the Word: Sacraments

W-3.3611 Cup

A cup and pitcher may be provided for the one who presides to use in presenting the cup. The use of a common cup expresses the communal nature of the Sacrament and reflects the consistent New Testament reference to a single cup. Pouring into the cup signifies the shed blood of Christ poured out for the world. The manner of distribution used by the particular community of faith may involve the provision of one cup or a number of cups suitably prepared for the people. The session is to determine what form of the fruit of the vine is to be used. In making this decision the session should be informed by the biblical precedent, the history of the church, ecumenical usage, local custom, and concerns for health and the conscience of members of the congregation. Whenever wine is used in the Lord's Supper, unfermented grape juice should always be clearly identified and served also as an alternative for those who prefer it.

W-3.3616d. The Serving

The bread and the cup may be served by those in the ordered ministry of the church, or by other church members on invitation of the session or authorizing council.

W-3.3616e.

The serving of the elements may be extended, by two or more persons in the ordered ministry of the church, to those isolated from the community's worship, provided :

W-3.3616e.(1) the elements are to be served following worship on the same calendar day, or as soon thereafter as practically feasible, as a direct extension of the serving of the gathered congregation, to church members who have accepted the church's invitation to receive the Sacrament;

W-3.3616e.(2) care is taken in the serving to ensure that the unity of Word and Sacrament is maintained, by the reading of Scripture and the offering of prayers; and

W-3.3616e.(3) those serving have been instructed by the session or authorized council in the theological and pastoral foundations of this ministry and in the liturgical resources for it (W-6.3011).

W-3.3619 Disposition of the Elements

When the service is ended, the communion elements shall be removed from the Table and used or disposed of in a manner which is approved by the session, and which is consistent with the Reformed understanding of the Sacrament and the principles of good stewardship.

W-3.4000 4. Service of Daily Prayer

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W-3.4005 Leadership

The service, authorized by the session, should be planned in consultation with the pastor, and may be led by appropriately prepared teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, or other members of the church.

W-3.5000 5. Other Regularly Scheduled Services of Worship

W-3.5101 Other Sunday Services

The primary service of worship on Sunday is the Service for the Lord's Day, scheduled at the time(s) when most members can participate. Other services may be regularly scheduled on Sunday, at times in the morning, afternoon, or evening. The time and nature of these services is to be determined by the session as it considers the needs of the congregation and the community. In planning these services, care should be taken to preserve the integrity of the Service for the Lord's Day.

W-3.5102 Elements

These services include the reading and hearing of the Word, prayer, and opportunities for self-offering and for relating to each other and the world. (W-2.1000-.2000; W-2.5000-.6000) They may place special emphasis upon prayer, congregational singing, the teaching of Scripture, and interpretation of the Word through the arts. Such services may include the preaching of the Word, or other forms of proclamation authorized by the pastor and the session. (W-1.4000; W-2.2000; W-3.3400) On those occasions the Sacraments may also be celebrated.

W-3.5400 d. Services for Wholeness

W-3.5401 Healing Services

Healing was an integral part of the ministry of Jesus which the church has been called to continue as one dimension of its concern for the wholeness of people. Through services for wholeness, the church enacts in worship its ministry as a healing community.

## W-3.5402 Authorization

Services for wholeness are to be authorized by the session, and shall be under the direction of the pastor. Such services may be observed as regularly scheduled services of worship, as occasional services, or as part of the Service for the Lord's Day. (W-3.3506) These services should be open to all and not restricted to those desiring healing for themselves or for others of special concern to them. The services should be held in a place readily accessible to those who may be seeking healing.

## W-3.5500 e. Services for Evangelism

## W-3.5501 Invitations to Discipleship

The invitation to respond to Jesus Christ should be offered frequently and regularly in the Service for the Lord's Day. (W-2.5002) It is appropriate for the session to authorize services for the particular purpose of evangelism, and to set such services at regular seasons. (W-3.2003; W-7.2000)

## W-3.5600 f. Program and Mission Interpretation

## W-3.5601 Services for Mission Emphasis

Interpretation of the program and mission of the church may occur in services of worship held for this purpose and regularly scheduled at appropriate seasons of the year. (W-3.2003) In these services, a primary focus is on the interpretation of the program or mission which has led the session to authorize the special service(s). Therefore a central emphasis of such worship is relating to the world and to each other. (W-2.6000)

## W-3.5700 g. Special Groups in the Local Congregation

## W-3.5701 Special Groups

In every local congregation there are special groups, constituted by age, gender, or interest, which meet regularly. Worship should ordinarily occur in meetings of these groups and should reflect the principles of this directory. All of the elements of worship in Chapter Two are appropriate in these settings except celebration of the Sacraments, which are acts of worship authorized by the session, ordinarily for the participation of the entire congregation.

#### W-4.0000 CHAPTER IV. ORDERING WORSHIP FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES

## W-4.2002 Welcoming to the Lord's Table

It is the responsibility of the whole congregation, particularly exercised through the session, to nurture those who are baptized to respond to the invitation to the Lord's Supper. When a person is baptized as a child, the session shall equip and support the parent(s) or those exercising parental responsibility for their task of nurturing the child for receiving the Lord's Supper. (W-2.3012) When the child begins to express a desire to receive this Sacrament, the session should take note of this and provide an occasion for recognition and welcome.

## W-4.2003 Confirming and Commissioning

The church nurtures those baptized as children and calls them to make public their personal profession of faith and their acceptance of responsibility in the life of the church. When these persons are ready, they shall be examined by the session. (G-3.0201c) After the session has received them as active members they shall be presented to the congregation during a service of public worship. In that service the church shall confirm them in their baptismal identity. They shall reaffirm the vows taken at Baptism by

a. professing their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior,

b. renouncing evil and affirming their reliance on God's grace,

c. declaring their intention to participate actively and responsibly in the worship and mission of the church. (W-3.3603)

They are commissioned for full participation in the mission and governance of the church, and are welcomed by the congregation. (W-3.3502; W-3.3602-3608; W-3.3701)

## W-4.2004 Reception of Other Members

The service for the reception of members into a congregation by transfer of certificate or by reaffirmation of faith is an occasion to recall one's earlier Baptism, profession of faith, and commitment to discipleship. After examination and reception by the session, these new members shall be recognized at a regularly scheduled service of public worship. (W-3.3502) It is appropriate for them to reaffirm the commitments made at Baptism, to make public again their profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to express their intention to participate actively in the worship and mission of the church. (W-3.3602) They are welcomed into the life of the congregation and are commissioned for service as members.

## W-4.2006 Renewal and Fresh Commitment

In the life of a believer there are times of special awakening, renewal, and fresh commitment which call for public expression, recognition, and celebration. People should be encouraged to share with the teaching elder(s) and with the session these decisive moments and stirrings of the Holy Spirit. It may often be appropriate for people to make public this sense of deepened commitment in a service of worship, and for the church to acknowledge it with prayer and thanksgiving. (W-3.3502; W-3.3701)

W-4.4003 Constitutional Questions for Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning

b. The members of the church having answered these questions in the affirmative, those to be ordained shall kneel, if able, for prayer and the laying on of hands by the session. Those previously ordained ordinarily shall stand, along with the congregation, if able, for the prayer of installation. The session may invite other ruling elders and teaching elders to participate in the laying on of hands.

W-4.4004d Session Welcomes

d. Then the members of the session, and others as may be appropriate, shall welcome the newly ordained and installed, or newly installed, ruling elders and deacons into their fellowship in ministry.

W-4.4006b Questions for Congregation

b. Following the affirmative answers to the questions asked of the person being installed, a ruling elder shall face the congregation along with the pastor elect (associate pastor elect) and shall ask them to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do we, the members of the church, accept (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ as our pastor (associate pastor), chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to guide us in the way of Jesus Christ?
- (2) Do we agree to pray for him (her), 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) 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?

W-4.9000 9. Marriage

W-4.9003 Time and Place of the Service

Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the teaching elder † and the supervision of the session. (W-1.4004 -4006) The marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service which focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor. Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires the approval of the session, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table is extended to all baptized present. The marriage service may take place during the Service for the Lord's Day upon authorization by the session. It should be placed in the order as a response to the proclamation of the Word. It may then be followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. (W-2.4010; W-3.3503)

W-4.10000 10. Services on the Occasion of Death

W-4.10002 Planning Arrangements

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, the session should encourage members to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death, including decisions about the Christian options of burial, cremation, or donation for medical purposes. These plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central. The session is responsible for establishing general policies concerning the observance of services on the occasion of death. (W-1.4004)

W-4.10003 Setting of the Service

The service on the occasion of death ordinarily should be held in the usual place of worship in order to join this service to the community's continuing life and witness to the resurrection. The service shall be under the direction of the pastor. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor. This service may be observed on any day. A request to observe such a service as a part of the Lord's Day service or to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a part of a service on the occasion of death requires the approval of the session.

**W-5.0000 CHAPTER V. WORSHIP AND PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP**

W-5.1000 1. Personal Worship, Discipleship, and the Community of Faith

W-5.1004 Worship and Discipline

The life of a Christian is empowered by grace, is expressed in obedience, and is shaped by discipline. God has given as means of grace the elements of worship to be used by households and by individuals as well as by congregations. (W-2.0000) The session should encourage people to use the disciplines described in this directory as expressions of their obedience and discipleship and as means for living and growing in the grace of God. (W-5.2000 -5.5000)

**W-6.0000            CHAPTER VI. WORSHIP AND MINISTRY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

**W-6.2005            Providers of Nurture in the Church**

In the service of Baptism the congregation, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, and on behalf of the universal Church, pledges responsibility for Christian nurture. (W-2.3013; W-3.3603) The session and the ruling elders are responsible for providing for the development and supervision of the educational program of the church, for instructing ruling elders and deacons, and for developing discipleship among members. (G-2.0301; G-3.0201) The pastor nurtures the community through the ministries of Word and Sacrament, by praying with and for the congregation, through formal and informal teaching, and by example. (G-6.0106; G-6.0202) Some in the community of faith whose special gifts and training have prepared them for a ministry of education are called to the task of leadership in nurture. Teachers, advisers, and others appointed by the session guide, instruct, and equip those for whose education and nurture they are responsible. (W-3.3503) Parents or those exercising parental responsibility share the faith of the church with children. (W-4.3002; W-5.7000)

**W-6.2006            Resources and Occasions for Nurture**

The primary standard and resource for the nurture of the church is the Word of God in Scripture. The central occasion for nurture in the church is the Service for the Lord's Day, when the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are celebrated. All members of the community, from oldest to youngest, are encouraged to be present and to participate. Educational activities should not be scheduled which prevent regular participation in this service. (W-3.1004) An important and continuing context for Christian nurture is the home, where faith is shared through worship, teaching, and example. The church provides other occasions for nurture

- a. in the classes of the church school,
- b. in other groups and fellowships organized for education and nurture,
- c. in groups and associations gathered for service and mission,
- d. in committees, boards, and councils,
- e. in retreats, camps, and conferences.

The confessional documents of the church provide guidance in nurture. (F-2.00) Shape and content for study and instruction are provided by the rich resources of the liturgical, cultural, and ethnic heritages of the church. Educational materials developed for various approaches to Christian nurture are appropriate for use as approved by the session. (G-3.0201)