

# Presiding at the Sacraments

## Principles for Presiding in Worship

- The presider is a person who has been called by God through the voice of the church to lead the people in praise and prayer. The presider has been equipped for this calling by the gifts of the Spirit and the instruction of the church. Therefore, the presider should have a clear role in visibly and graciously leading the congregation in worship, ordinarily taking responsibility for the majority of the speech and action in the liturgy.
- The role of the presider should be understood as *servant* leadership—a ministry undertaken in the name of Christ and for the sake of the church. Such leadership is a responsibility or calling to serve others, not a right or privilege to be lorded over others. Above all, the presider points to God’s gracious action in Jesus Christ and facilitates the people’s grateful response in worship and service.
- Liturgy is best understood as a prayerful activity of the whole body of Christ, worshiping God together. While it does consist of particular words and gestures by particular people, liturgy cannot be reduced to these elements in isolation; it depends on the relationships among them and the work of the Holy Spirit through them.
- Ordinarily, one presider is sufficient. Be mindful of unintended messages that may be conveyed by the practice of co-presiding. An attempt to share leadership among two or more persons may be perceived by worshipers as a display of dignitaries or even a power struggle among the pastoral staff. Of particular concern is the impulse to pair women and men at the font or table; in some contexts this may give the false impression that the woman’s leadership is incomplete.
- There are no magic words, magic actions, or magic people. But there *are* certain words, actions, and people that help us to identify “what the church does” when it celebrates the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Careful consideration should be given to the use of the words of institution, prayer for the Holy Spirit, manual actions with the water, bread, and cup, and the role of the Minister of Word and Sacrament as presider.
- A speaking part isn’t the only form of leadership or participation, and bold print in the bulletin (unison reading) doesn’t necessarily amount to meaningful engagement in worship. Our primary form of participation in worship is prayer, and the presider’s role is to draw people into this prayerful communion with God.
- The Presbyterian form of government and understanding of the church is built on shared responsibility and accountability, exercised through councils of the church that covenant together to seek the mind of Christ, the will of God, and the way of the Spirit. When in doubt about a particular practice or pattern of leadership at Baptism or the Lord’s Supper, consult with the appropriate council—the session, at the congregational level, or presbytery, for gatherings beyond the local congregation.
- Let faithfulness to God, vitality in Christ, and responsiveness to the Spirit be the goals of sacramental celebration, not validity. The sacraments are signs of Christ’s abundant grace and should be offered and received as “gifts of God for the people of God.”

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**Read John 13:1–17, 31b–35**, the Gospel reading for Maundy Thursday. What does Jesus do and say this passage? How does he demonstrate and exemplify the role of the presider? How does the presider proclaim and embody the “new commandment”—to love and serve one another as Christ has loved us? How do these actions reveal to others that we are Christ’s disciples?

In the pages that follow, the words in black boxes and in the left-hand column (marked with W-references) are from the Directory for Worship, found in the *Book of Order*, Part II of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The words in the right-hand column and the illustrations are from the *Book of Common Worship* (WJK, 2018), pp. xxi–xxv, 25–29, and 407–413.

“†” – In the Directory for Worship, the functions described as belonging to teaching elders may be, in particular circumstances, also performed by ruling elders.

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

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

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- Why are the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments such important signs of Christ’s presence and action with the church?
- Why is the work of the Holy Spirit so important in the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments?
- How have you experienced Christ’s presence and action through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments?

### **W-3.0401: Theology of the Sacraments**

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

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- What does it mean that the Word of God is “enacted and sealed in the life of the Church, the body of Christ,” through the Sacraments?
- How have you experienced the Sacraments as divine acts of grace? How have you experienced them as human expressions of gratitude?
- What are the distinctive words, actions, and prayers involved in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper? What are the “physical signs” and “spiritual gifts” of the Sacraments?
- Why do we say that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper have been instituted by Jesus Christ in the Scriptures and sustained through the history of the universal Church?

### **W-3.0402: Theology of Baptism**

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

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

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- What are the biblical stories, themes, and images you associate with Baptism?
- What does the sacrament of Baptism convey about: (a) who God is and what God does; (b) who we are and what we are called to do; and (c) who our neighbors are and how we called to live with them?

### **[W-3.0402 continued: Theology of Baptism]**

... Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is at once God's gift of grace, God's means of grace, and God's call to respond to that grace. Through Baptism, Jesus Christ calls us to repentance, faithfulness, and discipleship. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit gives the Church its identity and commissions the Church for service in the world.

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

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- In the liturgy for Baptism, how can the presider communicate God's gracious action and facilitate the people's grateful response?
- How can the presider embody and express God's invitation to repentance and new life, the unity of the Church as the body of Christ, and the call to justice, reconciliation, and service in the world?

### **[W-3.0402 continued: Theology of Baptism]**

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

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

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

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

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

### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- How are infant and believer's baptism "one and the same Sacrament," yet different?
- Why is it important to remember baptism? Why is it important not to repeat baptism?
- How can baptism be an act of the local congregation and of the universal church?

### **W-3.0403: Responsibility for Baptism**

Baptism shall be authorized by the session and administered by a teaching elder†. The session's responsibilities for Baptism include: encouraging parents (or those exercising parental responsibility) to present their children for Baptism without undue haste or undue delay; encouraging new believers to be baptized; examining candidates for Baptism, or their parents, and instructing them in the significance of the Sacrament; enrolling those who are baptized as members of the congregation; and providing for their ongoing nurture and formation for baptismal life in the world. The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the universal Church, is responsible for nurturing baptized persons in Christian life. The session may designate certain members of the congregation as sponsors or mentors for those who are baptized or for their parents. ...

### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- Why is it important to have authorization from the session when celebrating Baptism?
- Why is it important that Baptism be administered by a teaching elder (or ruling elder) who is authorized and trained for this ministry?
- Why is it important for Baptism to be celebrated as an act of the congregation?

**[W-3.0403 continued: Responsibility for Baptism]**

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

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

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- In what ways can parents (or others exercising parental responsibility) be a significant part of a child's life of Christian formation and baptismal discipleship? How do members of the congregation share in this task?
- In what ways can parents (or others exercising parental responsibility) prepare children for active membership in the church and service in the world? How do members of the congregation share in this task?

### W-3.0404: Presentation

The teaching elder† introduces the Sacrament of Baptism with sentences of Scripture; other sentences of Scripture may be spoken by ruling elders, members of the congregation, or ecumenical witnesses. ...

*Rubrics (in red print) offer instructions for planners and leaders of worship as well as guidance on liturgical action. They are not spoken in the service and ordinarily do not appear in printed worship aids for participants. Rubrics are especially important in helping us to embody the action of the liturgy through movement, posture, and gesture.*

*In this resource, parenthetical references to page numbers indicate the location of additional liturgical texts in the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018); parenthetical page number references preceded by the abbreviation GTG indicate related musical materials in Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal (WJK, 2013); the abbreviation PH refers to similar materials in the Presbyterian Hymnal: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs (WJK, 1990).*

*Green letters (ABCD, etc.) refer to illustrations of liturgical gestures.*

### PRESENTATION

*The presider addresses all present:*

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: Matt. 28:18–20  
All authority in heaven and on earth  
has been given to me.  
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit,  
and teaching them to obey  
everything that I have commanded you.  
And remember, I am with you always,  
to the end of the age.

Hear also these words from holy scripture:

*A member of the congregation or ecumenical representative may speak these or similar words (441–42):*

- 1 There is one body and one Spirit, Eph. 4:4–6  
just as you were called  
to the one hope of your calling,  
**one Lord, one faith, one baptism,**  
**one God and Father of all,**  
**who is above all and through all and in all.**
- 2 As many of you as were baptized into Christ Gal. 3:27–28  
have clothed yourselves with Christ.  
**There is no longer Jew or Greek,**  
**there is no longer slave or free,**  
**there is no longer male and female;**  
**for all are one in Christ Jesus.**

*The presider continues:*

Obedying the word of our Lord Jesus,  
and confident of his promises,  
we baptize those whom God has called.

In baptism God claims us,  
and seals us to show that we belong to God.  
God frees us from sin and death,  
uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.

By water and the Holy Spirit,  
we are made members of the church, the body of Christ,  
and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice.

Let us remember with joy our own baptism,  
as we celebrate this sacrament.

**[W-3.0404 continued:  
Presentation]**

... On behalf of the session, a ruling elder presents each candidate for Baptism. Those desiring Baptism for their children or themselves express their intent to receive the Sacrament. Parents, sponsors (if applicable), and the congregation make vows to support and nurture those being baptized. No one comes to Baptism alone; we are encouraged by family or friends and surrounded by the community of faith.

*An elder or session-appointed sponsor presents each candidate for baptism:*

***For adults  
and older children***

On behalf of the session,  
I present N. [and N.]  
to receive the  
Sacrament of Baptism.

***For infants  
and younger children***

On behalf of the session,  
I present N. [and N.],  
*child* of N. [and N.],  
to receive the  
Sacrament of Baptism.

*The presider addresses, in turn, candidates for baptism, parents bringing children for baptism, sponsors, and the congregation:*

***Adults  
and older children***

Putting your whole trust  
in the grace and love  
of Jesus Christ,  
N. [and N.],  
do you desire  
to be baptized? **I do.**

***Parent(s) of infants  
and younger children***

Do you desire  
that N. [and N.]  
be baptized? **I do.**

Relying on God's grace,  
do you promise  
to live the Christian faith,  
and to teach that faith  
to your child? **I do.**

*The presider addresses the sponsors, if any are present:*

Will you, by your prayers and witness, help N. [and N.]  
to grow into the full stature of Christ? **I will.**

*Additional questions may be asked of the children of the church (442–43).*

*The presider addresses the congregation:*

Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ,  
promise to guide and nurture N. [and N.]  
by word and deed, with love and prayer? **We do.**

Will you encourage *her/him/them* to know and follow Christ  
and to be faithful members of his church? **We will.**

### **W-3.0405: Profession of Faith**

Candidates for Baptism or their parents shall renounce evil and profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Those who are being baptized upon profession of faith declare their intent to participate actively and responsibly in the church's worship and mission. Together with the congregation they profess their faith, using the Apostles' Creed, the baptismal affirmation of the early Church.

### **PROFESSION OF FAITH**

Through the Sacrament of Baptism we enter the covenant God established in Jesus Christ.

Within this covenant God gives us new life, strengthens us to resist evil, and nurtures us in love.

Through this covenant, we choose whom we will serve, by turning from evil and turning to Jesus Christ.

*The presider asks questions (443) of the candidates for baptism and/or the parents or guardians of children being presented for baptism.*

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God,  
do you turn from the ways of sin  
and renounce evil and its power in the world?

**I renounce them. or I do.**

Who is your Lord and Savior?

**Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.**

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple,  
obeying his word and showing his love?

**I will, with God's help.**

*The presider asks the following question of those being baptized on public profession of faith:*

Will you devote yourself  
to the church's teaching and fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread and the prayers?  
**I will, with God's help.**

*Acts 2:42*

*The people may stand.*

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

*All profess their faith by reciting the Apostles' Creed as follows or in another version (85), or using the question and answer form (443-44):*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

### W-3.0406: Thanksgiving over the Water

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

**D** *The orans (Latin for praying) posture for prayer is traditionally used in eucharistic prayer, and may be used in other prayers in the liturgy as well. This ancient gesture, associated with the image of Christ crucified and risen and with the idea of opening or lifting our hearts to God, can be seen in depictions of prayer from early Christian art.*

### THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

**A** *Water is poured visibly and audibly into the font.*

*The presider leads the people in the following or similar prayer (445–48):*

**B** The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

**C** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**



**D** We give you thanks, Eternal God, for you nourish and sustain all living things by the gift of water.

In the beginning of time, your Spirit moved over the watery chaos, calling forth order and life.

In the time of Noah, you destroyed evil by the waters of the flood, giving righteousness a new beginning.

You led Israel out of slavery, through the waters of the sea, into the freedom of the promised land.

In the waters of the Jordan Jesus was baptized by John and anointed with your Spirit.

By the baptism of his own death and resurrection, Christ set us free from sin and death, and opened the way to eternal life.

We thank you, O God, for the water of baptism.

In it we are buried with Christ in his death.

From it we are raised to share in his resurrection.

Through it we are reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit.



**E/F** *The presider may touch the water or extend a hand over the water.*

Send your Spirit to move over this water that it may be a fountain of deliverance and rebirth.

Wash away the sin of all who are cleansed by it.

Raise them to new life, and graft them to the body of Christ.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon N. [and N.], that *she/he/they* may have power to do your will, and continue forever in the risen life of Christ.



**[D]** To you be all praise, honor, and glory; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns forever. **Amen.**

### W-3.0407: The Act of Baptism

Accompanied by a visible and generous use of water, the teaching elder† shall address each person by their Christian or given name and say: “[Name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The water used for Baptism should be from a local source, and may be applied with the hand (G), by pouring (H), or through immersion (I). ...



### [W-3.0407 continued: The Act of Baptism]

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

*At the reaffirmation of baptism for a congregation, the presider may make the sign of the cross (J) over the congregation.*



### THE BAPTISM

*Children and adults who are to be baptized by sprinkling may kneel. Those to be baptized by pouring may either be held over the font (G) (in the case of a small child), or extend their heads over it (H); or, when water is to be poured over the whole body, stand in a place properly prepared. Where there is a pool that permits full immersion (I), the candidate will step into the water.*

*Using each candidate’s Christian (first or first and middle) name, the presider shall pour water visibly and generously on the candidate’s head, or immerse the candidate in water, while saying the baptismal formula (448):*

N., I baptize you  
in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*The newly baptized may be given a white garment or be wrapped in white towels.*

*The presider continues, saying one of the following:*

- 1 As many of you as were baptized into Christ Gal. 3:27  
have clothed yourselves with Christ.
- 2 As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, Col. 3:12  
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness,  
humility, meekness, and patience.

### LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING

*The presider lays hands on the head of each person baptized, saying the following, or a similar prayer (449). Or, all present may be asked to extend their hands in a gesture of blessing while sponsors place their hands on the heads of those baptized, and the presider prays:*

O Lord, uphold N. [and N.] by your Holy Spirit. Isa. 11:2  
Give her/him/them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,  
the spirit of joy in your presence,  
both now and forever. **Amen.**

*The presider may make the sign of the cross with oil on the forehead, or pour oil on the head, of each of the newly baptized, while saying:*

- 1 N., child of the covenant,  
you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism,  
and marked as Christ’s own forever. **Amen.**
- 2 N., child of God,  
you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism,  
and grafted into Christ forever. **Amen.**

*The presider addresses those who have been baptized with these or similar words.*

God who began a good work in you Phil. 1:6  
will bring it to completion  
by the day of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*Candidates who have been kneeling will stand.*

### W-3.0408: Welcome

The newly baptized person is welcomed as a member of the Church, the body of Christ. Appropriate gifts may be given, such as a candle (reflecting the light of Christ) or a baptismal garment (signifying being clothed with Christ). The peace of Christ may be exchanged, if not previously shared.

The Church's way of welcome into the body of Christ involves the unrepeatable Sacrament of Baptism and the repeatable Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Christ bathes us with mercy, then feeds us with grace. Since this ancient pattern of initiation includes both Sacraments, the Lord's Supper appropriately follows Baptism; those who have just been baptized may be invited to receive communion first.

### WELCOME

*An elder or ecumenical representative may say:*

N. [and N.], you have been received into the one holy catholic and apostolic church through Baptism.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, you have become members of the household of God, to share with us in the ministry of Christ and the priesthood of all believers.

With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you into the body of Christ. **Alleluia! Amen!**

*A baptismal candle may be lighted from the paschal candle and given by a sponsor or elder to each of the baptized or to those presenting children for baptism.*

Live as a child of the light *Matt. 5:16; Eph. 5:8*  
and let your light shine before others. **Amen.**

*The presider says:*

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

*Those who have been baptized are welcomed in a manner appropriate to the particular congregation. The people may sing a refrain such as "You Have Put On Christ" (GTG 491) or "You Belong to Christ" (GTG 492), an ascription of praise (GTG 580–91), or a baptismal hymn (GTG 475–93).*

*The people may exchange signs of God's peace, greeting those who have been baptized.*

*The service continues with the prayers of the people, which include petitions for the newly baptized and for those who will nurture them (449–51).*

*It is appropriate for the newly baptized to receive Communion first.*

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### Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What have you learned about presiding at Baptism from this resource?
- What surprised, confused, or challenged you? What other questions do you have?
- How will you seek to make use of this learning in your practice of ministry?

### **W-3.0409: Theology of the Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper (or Eucharist) is the sign and seal of our communion with the crucified and risen Lord. Jesus shared meals with his followers throughout his earthly life and ministry—common suppers, miraculous feasts, and the covenant commemorations of the people of God. Jesus spoke of himself as the bread of life, and the true vine, in whom we are branches. On the night before his death, Jesus shared bread and wine with his disciples. He spoke of the bread and wine as his body and blood, signs of the new covenant and told the disciples to remember him by keeping this feast. On the day of his resurrection, Jesus made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of the bread. The disciples continued to devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, prayers, and the common meal. As Paul wrote, when we share the bread and cup in Jesus' name, "we who are many are one body" (1 Cor. 10:17).

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

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- What are the biblical stories, themes, and images you associate with the Lord's Supper?
- What does the sacrament of the Lord's Supper convey about: (a) who God is and what God does; (b) who we are and what we are called to do; and (c) who our neighbors are and how we called to live with them?

### **[W-3.0409 continued: Theology of the Lord's Supper]**

... The Lord's Supper enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's sustaining grace offered to all people. The Lord's Supper is at once God's gift of grace, God's means of grace, and God's call to respond to that grace. Through the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ nourishes us in righteousness, faithfulness, and discipleship. Through the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit renews the Church in its identity and sends the Church to mission in the world.

When we gather at the Lord's Supper the Spirit draws us into Christ's presence and unites with the Church in every time and place. We join with all the faithful in heaven and on earth in offering thanksgiving to the triune God. We reaffirm the promises of our baptism and recommit ourselves to love and serve God, one another, and our neighbors in the world. ...

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- In the liturgy for the Lord's Supper, how can the presider communicate God's gracious action and facilitate the people's grateful response?
- How can the presider embody and express God's invitation into the presence of Christ and call to join Christ's mission in the world?

### **[W-3.0409 continued: Theology of the Lord's Supper]**

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

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

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

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- How are the sacraments of Baptism and the Lords' Supper related and connected?
- Why are confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation important parts of our preparation for communion with God and one another in the Lords' Supper?
- How can the Lord's Supper be presented and experienced as "a regular part of the Service for the Lord's Day"?

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

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

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

#### *Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- Why is it important to have authorization from the session (or other appropriate council) when celebrating the Lord's Supper?
- Why is it important that the Lords' Supper be administered by a teaching elder (or ruling elder) who is authorized and trained for this ministry?
- Why is it important for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated as an act of the congregation?

### W-3.0411: Offering

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

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

### OFFERING

*One of the following, or another invitation to offering (118), may be said.*

- 1 The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it, Ps. 24:1  
**the world, and those who live in it.**
- 2 Freely you have received, freely give. Matt. 10:8

*Then the leader says:*

Let us return to God the offerings of our life  
and the gifts of the earth.

*As offerings are gathered, an anthem may be sung or other appropriate music may be offered. The presider and elders or deacons prepare the table. The people's offerings, which may include food for people who are hungry, are brought to the table. A song of praise may be sung.*

*As the offerings are presented, the following may be said:*

Heaven and earth are yours, O Lord, 1 Chr. 29:11, 14  
**and of your own we give you.**

*An elder or deacon may then pray:*

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things.  
Through your goodness  
you have blessed us with these gifts:  
our selves, our time, and our possessions.

Use us, and what we have gathered,  
in feeding the world with your love;  
through the one who gave himself for us,  
Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**<sup>ELW</sup>

*The norm of Christian worship is to celebrate the Lord's Supper on each Lord's Day. If the Lord's Supper is omitted, the service may include a prayer of thanksgiving (149–51), concluding with the Lord's Prayer (144). The service then continues at the closing hymn.*

*Rubrics (in red print) offer instructions for planners and leaders of worship as well as guidance on liturgical action. They are not spoken in the service and ordinarily do not appear in printed worship aids for participants. Rubrics are especially important in helping us to embody the action of the liturgy through movement, posture, and gesture.*

*In this resource, parenthetical references to page numbers indicate the location of additional liturgical texts in the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018); parenthetical page number references preceded by the abbreviation GTG indicate related musical materials in Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal (WJK, 2013); the abbreviation PH refers to similar materials in the Presbyterian Hymnal: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs (WJK, 1990).*

*Green letters (ABCD, etc.) refer to illustrations of liturgical gestures.*

### W-3.0412: Great Thanksgiving

Following the offering and the preparation of the table, a teaching elder† invites worshipers to the Lord’s Supper using sentences of Scripture. ...

*As this Invitation to the Lord’s Table illustrates, the Gospels exhibit a distinctive pattern of action—taking, blessing, breaking, and giving bread—when Jesus shared meals, whether at the feeding of the multitudes, at Passover before his death, or in his resurrection appearances.*

### [W-3.0412 continued: Great Thanksgiving]

... At the table, facing the people, the teaching elder† shall lead the people in a prayer to the triune God: giving thanks for God’s creative power, providential care, and covenant faithfulness, along with particular blessings of the day; ...

*D The orans (Latin for praying) posture for prayer is traditionally used in eucharistic prayer, and may be used in other prayers in the liturgy as well. This ancient gesture, associated with the image of Christ crucified and risen and with the idea of opening or lifting our hearts to God, can be seen in depictions of prayer from early Christian art.*

*Musical responses, such as the Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation, and Amen are an important form of congregational participation.*

### INVITATION TO THE LORD’S TABLE

*The presider may say these or similar words (119):*

This is the joyful feast of the people of God!  
People will come from north and south and from east and west to sit at table in the kingdom of God.

*Luke 13:29; 24:30–31*

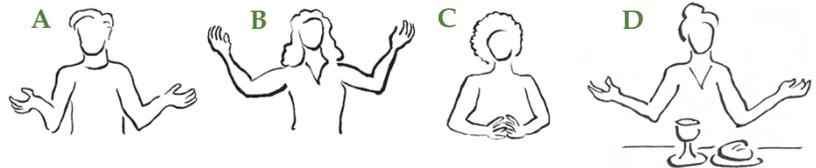
According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

This is the Lord’s Table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast that he has prepared.

### GREAT THANKSGIVING

*All may stand for the Great Thanksgiving (121). The introductory dialogue may be sung (GTG 9) or spoken. With hands lifted, the presider says:*

- A** The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
- B** Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**
- C** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**



- D** Praise to you, O God, for all your works. You created the world and called it good and made us in your image to live together in love. You made a covenant with us, and even when we turned from you, you remained ever faithful.

*The Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord”) may be sung (GTG 551–609; PH 565–605) or spoken (141–42):*

Therefore with all creation we sing your praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

**[W-3.0412 continued:**

**Great Thanksgiving]**

... remembering God's acts of salvation through Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promised return, ...

**[W-3.0412 continued:**

**Great Thanksgiving]**

... as well as Jesus' institution of the Sacrament (if not otherwise spoken at the invitation to the table or the breaking of the bread); ...

*In Reformed tradition and according to the PC(USA) Directory for Worship, the words of institution may be used at one of three places in the eucharistic liturgy: (1) at the Invitation to the Table, (2) during the Great Thanksgiving, or (3) at the Breaking of the Bread. This resource, like the 2018 Book of Common Worship, encourages the second option as most consistent with ecumenical practice and most conducive to a joyful celebration of the Lord's Supper. Regardless of where the words of institution are used, the bread is broken (and cup poured) after the Great Thanksgiving.*

**[W-3.0412 continued:**

**Great Thanksgiving]**

... and calling on the Holy Spirit to draw worshipers into the presence of the risen Lord, nourish them in the body and blood of Christ, unite them with Christ in the communion of saints and the Church in every place, and send them in mission to the world. ...

*The presider continues:*

[D] Thank you, O God, for sending us your Son. He lived among us and told your story. He healed the sick and welcomed sinners. He shared our pain and died our death, then rose to new life that we might live, and all creation be restored.



*When the words of institution are included within the eucharistic prayer, the bread and cup may be lifted or touched (E), but they are not broken and poured at this time.*

*The words of institution (142–43) are spoken here, if not elsewhere:*

E We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.



In the same way Jesus took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

*The presider continues:*

[D] Remembering your boundless love revealed to us in Jesus Christ, we break bread and share the cup, giving ourselves to you to live for him in joy and praise.

*The memorial acclamation may be sung (GTG 551–609; PH 565–605) or spoken (143):*

Great is the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died, Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.**

*The presider continues:*

F Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ and that we may be his body for the world.



[D] By your Spirit unite us with Christ and one another until we feast with him and with all your saints in your eternal realm of justice and peace.

**[W-3.0412 continued:**

**Great Thanksgiving]**

... The prayer ends with praise to the triune God. Musical acclamations, such as “Holy, holy, holy,” “Christ has died,” and “Amen,” may be included. The Lord’s Prayer follows.

*Congregations may wish to use another version of the Lord’s Prayer (debts/debtors, e.g.). The ecumenical, contemporary English version is provided here to promote the unity of the church and to encourage prayer in the vernacular (common) language of the people of God. The presider may invite worshipers to pray “in the words closest to your heart,” including languages other than English.*

**W-3.0413: Breaking the Bread**

At the table, in full view of the people, the teaching elder† breaks the bread and pours the cup, or lifts a cup that has already been filled. These actions may be accompanied by sentences of Scripture or performed in silence. The use of one loaf and one cup expresses the unity of the body of Christ and the communal nature of the Sacrament. The bread used for the Lord’s Supper should be common to the culture of the congregation; those who prepare the bread shall make provision for the full participation of the congregation. The session will determine whether wine is used; a non-alcoholic option shall be provided and clearly identified.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor are yours, almighty God,  
now and forever. **Amen.**

*The Amen may be sung (GTG 551–609; PH 565–605) or spoken.*

**LORD’S PRAYER**

*The Lord’s Prayer is sung (GTG 464; PH 571, 589–90) or spoken (144).*

As our Savior Christ has taught us,  
we are bold to pray:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

**BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

**G** *The presider lifts and breaks the bread, saying words of scripture (145):*

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. John 6:35; 15:5

**H** *The presider pours and/or lifts the cup, saying words of scripture (145):*

Jesus said: I am the vine, you are the branches.

Come to me and never be hungry;  
believe in me and never thirst.

**I** *Extending the bread and cup to the people, the presider says:*

The gifts of God for the people of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**



*These biblical words at the breaking of the bread are drawn from the “I am” sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Jesus said: I am ... the bread of life; the light of the world; the gate for the sheep; the good shepherd; the way, the truth, and the life; the resurrection and the life; and the true vine. These evocative phrases connect Jesus with the holy name of God in the Hebrew Scriptures: “I am who I am” (Exod. 3:14).*

### W-3.0414: Communion

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

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

### COMMUNION

*During the communion of the people, hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs may be sung (GTG 494–538; PH 500–521), or other appropriate music may be offered.*

**J** *In giving the bread, the server says:*

- 1 The bread of heaven. **Amen.**
- 2 The body of Christ,  
given for you. **Amen.**

**K** *In giving the cup, the server says:*

- 1 The cup of salvation. **Amen.**
- 2 The blood of Christ,  
given for you. **Amen.**



### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*The presider leads one of the following or another prayer after Communion (146). Option 1 may be sung (GTG 535; PH 597).*

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul;  
**and all that is within me,  
bless God's holy name.**

*Ps. 103:1–2*

Bless the Lord, O my soul;  
**and forget not all God's benefits.**

- 2 God of abundance,  
with this bread of life and cup of salvation  
you have united us with Christ,  
making us one with all your people.

Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit  
that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world  
and continue forever in the risen life  
of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**<sup>ELW</sup>

*J It is best for the server to take a piece of bread and place it in the hands of each worshiper. This manner of distributing the bread is most consistent with the nature of the sacrament, as the grace of God is something we receive as a gift, not something we take for ourselves. Worshipers may approach the communion servers with hands cupped and outstretched, a prayerful gesture that expresses our readiness to receive the gift of God's grace.*

**[W-3.0414 continued:  
Communion]**

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

At the conclusion of the Service for the Lord's Day, the bread and cup are to be removed from the table and used or disposed of in a manner approved by the session, in keeping with the Reformed understanding of the Sacrament and principles of good stewardship. This may be accomplished by consuming what remains or returning the elements to the earth.

*Deacons and/or elders may be commissioned to extend the celebration of the Lord's Supper to those unable to gather with the worshipping community (745). The presider and people say:*

We send you out with this bread and cup 1 Cor. 10:17  
to share the feast of the risen Lord.

**We who are many are one body,  
for we all partake of the one bread.**

*Those commissioned for the extended serving of Communion depart immediately.*

*The extended serving of communion is a strong sign of the unity of the church, including in the sacrament those who are unable to gather with the worshipping community. It is also a valuable opportunity for ruling elders and deacons to be engaged in the ministry of pastoral care.*

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

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

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*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

- What have you learned about presiding at the Lord's Supper from this resource?
- What surprised, confused, or challenged you? What other questions do you have?
- How will you seek to make use of this learning in your practice of ministry?